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WASHINGTON IRVING
His Life

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OTHER BOOKS
BY CATHERINE O. PEARCE

Rosa Bonheur

Jules Verne

John James Audubon

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Robert Louis Stevenson

Louisa May Alcott

Mark Twain

Albert Einstein

Mahatma Gandhi

WASHINGTON



Illustrated by Margaret Ayer

IRVING

His Life

by

Catherine Owens Peare



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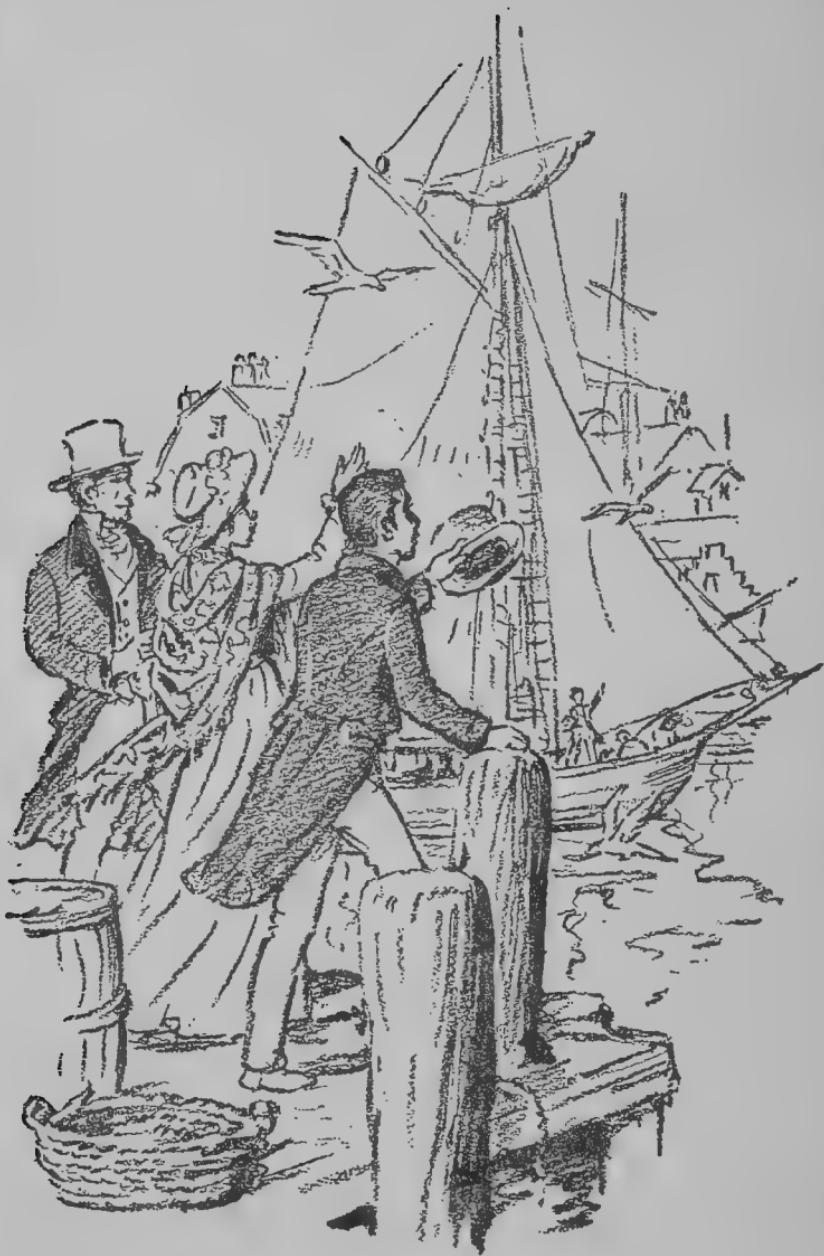


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WASHINGTON IRVING

His Life





Independence

Chapter

One

“*Humph!*” said the deacon as he stopped in front of his shop at 75 William Street.

Soon the idle store would hum with business again, and its shelves would be filled with merchandise. The American Revolution was over, even though peace had not yet been officially proclaimed.

The stern-faced man, wearing knee breeches and buckled shoes, looked around him. He frowned at the heaps of rubbish in the streets. He frowned at the houses from which the owners had fled so long ago. Many of them were being used by British officers. He thought of all the houses in town that had been gutted by fire. New York town was in a shameful state. The British troops had occupied it for seven years.

“We’ll soon have things running again,” he

mumbled, and there was a Scottish burr in his speech.

The deacon waved his cane at his seventeen-year-old-son, William, who was inside the shop tending the counter. Then he walked on up William Street to his house at Number 131. It stood between Fulton and John streets, and it looked like all the other little Dutch houses along the street with their sharp-pointed roofs. He was about to mount the steps to his front door when he noticed a young man waiting.

“Mr. Irving, sir?”

“Humph! Yes.”

“I just wanted to inquire about your wife, sir. Is Mrs. Irving, is she . . . ?”

“Oh, yes. I’m sure she’ll be all right.”

William Irving looked hard at the young man. “Does she know you?” he demanded.

“I don’t think so. I don’t think my name would mean anything to her. I was one of the American prisoners here during the Revolution. They just released me. Your wife brought me hot food more than once. We all remember Mrs. Irving, sir. She was an angel of mercy to the prisoners—food, blankets, medicine.”

The deacon almost smiled in spite of himself.

“When do you expect the new baby?” the young man asked.

“Any moment now. Any moment.”

“May I call back and inquire again?”

“Of course, of course!”

The young man started to walk away, but William Irving called him back.

“What about you?” he inquired. “Have you a place?”

“I’m doing fine, thank you. There’s plenty of work to be had in New York now, even before the British troops have left. Houses have to be rebuilt and repaired. New Yorkers are coming back home by the hundreds.”

“Good, good!” said the deacon.

“I hope your trading business will pick up now that the war is over.”

“It will, it will!” Mr. Irving replied.

Just then a soldier in a bright red coat walked past, and the deacon and the young man exchanged a sly wink as they said “good day” to each other.

“How is she?” Mr. Irving demanded as soon as the maid appeared to take his hat and cane.

“Not yet, Mr. Irving.”

“Humph! Where are the boys?”

“All over town, Mr. Irving. There’s too much excitement to hold them, what with peace almost here. They did promise me, though, that they wouldn’t pelt any of the soldiers with stones.”

"I hope they keep that promise."

Peter was eleven and Ebenezer was seven. Their childhood had been a little wild so far, in spite of all their parents tried to do. They were too young to remember when New York City had not been occupied and fortified by British soldiers. For all Peter and Ebenezer knew, there had always been British warships in the harbor pointing their guns this way and that.

Deacon Irving found that the boys had left five-year-old John behind, calling him "too young." His three daughters were in the parlor—thirteen-year-old Ann, nine-year-old Catherine, and three-year-old Sarah. That made seven children, four boys and three girls. What would the eighth child be? Humph! He'd have to wait and see.

Not until eight-thirty that evening, on the third of April, 1783, did the Irvings hear the first cries of the new infant. Mr. Irving went in to see his wife and his fifth son. The infant was sleeping and his wife looked very tired. But she smiled happily and said, "Washington's work is ended, and the child shall be named for him."

Washington Irving! The deacon approved.

In that same month the official proclamation of peace was read from the steps of City Hall on Wall Street. The crowd scarcely waited to hear the end of the paper, since they already knew its contents.

They began to cheer and jostle and shout and run wild in every direction. A separate country! A brand-new nation! Self-government!

"Just think of it! Just think of it!" declared the deacon, poking a friend in the stomach with his cane. "Just think of it!"

"That I am, Deacon!" cried his friend. "That I am!"

Now the young men could leave the army and go back to their neglected farms. The burned-out houses in New York could be rebuilt. And the wharves—yes! They could be repaired, and ships of trade could come and go freely in New York harbor. A merchant could hope for a little prosperity to provide for his family.

"A larger house. That's what my family needs," muttered William Irving to himself. "I must move them out of our shabby affair into something bigger."

He very soon found a suitable house, almost exactly across the street from their old one. It would take some repair after being used for an officers' headquarters for seven years, but it could be made attractive.

Soon after that the Irvings—all ten of them—moved to 128 William Street. The new house, made of brick and timber, was really two houses, one behind the other, with a small connecting building



between. Each house had a steep, pointed roof. In back was a large garden with plenty of fruit trees—plums, apricots, nectarines.

When the youngest Irving was not quite eight months old, General George Washington—the man of the hour—came riding down Broadway on horseback, at the head of a column of his men. Other American troops lined the sides of the street and so did throngs of citizens. No elegant uniforms on these troops. The men were dressed in worn-out, tattered clothing, and their faces were thin, but they looked happy. General Washington led them downtown to the Battery, to take over Fort George from the British. The happy crowds ran along with

the procession, cheering and shouting. The Irvings were there, pushed along in the hustle and bustle, the deacon carrying his youngest.

With the greatest dignity General Washington and his officers met the British officers for the ceremony. At last the colors were struck and the new flag hoisted. British troops marched to the water's edge and climbed into the big rowboats waiting to carry them out to the transport ships riding at anchor in the harbor.

Events moved swiftly after that. Only nine days later, on the 4th of December, General Washington met with his officers in Fraunces Tavern at Broad and Pearl streets to say farewell to them. Admiring crowds once more filled the streets, waiting for a glimpse of him, but when he came out of the tavern they were rather quiet, for this occasion was sad. General Washington was saying farewell to them, too.

Mrs. Irving's handkerchief was soaked.

"Isn't he tall!" she said when she caught sight of George Washington. "And so handsome!"

"Yes, indeed," the deacon agreed, trying to control himself.

Even Peter and Ebenezer were subdued by the thought that General Washington was going home to Mount Vernon.

General Washington walked solemnly past col-

umns of infantry to the water's edge and there stepped into a barge. The oarsmen rowed him away. Slowly the crowds dispersed.

"I don't mind telling you," said William Irving to his family as they strolled home, "that was the most touching scene I have ever witnessed."

The John Street Theater

Chapter

Two

New York began to prosper and grow. The new houses constantly a-building were no longer Dutch in appearance. They were three and four stories tall with straight sides and flat roofs. Ships came and went with imports and exports. William Irving and William Irving, Jr., at last had enough merchandise for their store.

Mr. Irving had come from the Orkney Islands in the northernmost part of Scotland, and that made him a keen businessman. He was a very pious man, too, and that was why the Scottish Presbyterian churches of New York had made him one of their deacons. He wanted his children to be pious, and he enforced a strict routine at home. One afternoon a week was set aside for their catechism, and prayers were held at nine o'clock every night. On Sunday the entire Irving family, right down to the young-

est member, went to church at least twice. On Sunday evening they either returned to church for a lecture or gathered around Mr. Irving at home while he read to them from *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

Mrs. Irving revered God just as much as her husband did, but she was more cheerful and kindly about it. She had been brought up in the Episcopal Church, because she had been born in Falmouth, England. When the family met to read *The Pilgrim's Progress*, she did her best to make the adventures of Christian really exciting as he toiled along with his burden on his back. She enjoyed the story so much that her children couldn't help but enjoy it along with her.

Even as a very small boy, Washington Irving learned to respect his stern Scottish father from a safe distance, and to clamber all over his warm, generous mother when he needed love.

Washington was sent to school on Ann Street—two blocks north of his home—when he was only four. It was a "dame school," or kindergarten, taught by Mrs. Ann Kilmaster, and it met in the teacher's home. The small boy showed no promise that early. He was dreamy and fanciful. Mrs. Kilmaster often discovered him gazing out of the window with no thought for his lessons. It took her almost two years to teach him his alphabet.

When Washington was five his oldest sister, Ann, married Richard Dodge. She was the first to leave home. She and her new husband moved far up into New York State to Johnstown, in the Indian country.

Washington Irving had just passed his sixth birthday when the man for whom he was named came back to New York. George Washington had been elected the first President of the United States. His inauguration was to take place in New York, the temporary national capital. The town had prepared for the event with a great flurry and fluster, and everyone agreed that welcoming George Washington back was much better than saying farewell. On a warm April day in 1789, gay crowds lined the streets and wharves once more. George Washington came up New York harbor with other members of the new government in a great barge built especially for him, pulled by twenty-six oars. Small craft dotted the harbor. Flags and garlands of flowers hung everywhere. Choristers stood at attention in other boats ready to sing, and orchestras and bands waited to play. The guns of the fort fired a round of salutes. The barge put in at the foot of Wall Street.

The Irvings were there to help make the dense crowd.

“Hold the baby up on your shoulder so that he

can see!" Mrs. Irving said to her husband. And up in the air Washington Irving went, to catch a glimpse of the man who was everybody's hero.

The President and his party had a difficult time making their way through the mobs of admirers, up Queen Street (now Pearl Street) to the Franklin House where George Washington was to live.

"I don't know how much more of this my heart can stand!" said the deacon, and his voice was choked.

The town did finally settle down. And the Irving family settled down. Washington Irving finished his two years of kindergarten.

But the Irvings' maid was not satisfied. She was walking with the child one day when she saw President Washington enter a store. With determination she followed him right on in.

"Please, your Honor," she said to the new President, "here's a bairn was named after you."

The tall, dignified gentleman smiled and looked down at Washington Irving. He patted his little namesake on the head and blessed him. The maid took Washington Irving home in triumph.

"Now he'll amount to something!" she declared.
"Now he'll surely amount to something!"

But many years passed before Washington Irving showed any promise. At six he began school in ear-



nest—at Benjamin Romaine's school for boys and girls on Fulton Street. At least, Mr. Romaine was in earnest about it, even if Washington Irving was not. Mr. Romaine had been a soldier, and he believed in strict discipline.

In those days the teacher was called a "school-master," and he was master indeed. He sat up on a platform in the front of the room with a birch rod or sharp ruler close at hand, watching sternly over the students sitting on benches around the wall. "A smart application in the rear to help him over a tall word," was what a lad could expect, Washington Irving wrote years later.

Sometimes a boy had to take such a severe caning that the girls were dismissed from the room. The scene was too painful for the sensitive Washington to watch, and he asked to be excused with the girls. Very sensibly, the teacher allowed him to go.

There were no blackboards or maps and very few books. Each student had a copy book of rough paper, and he wrote in it with ink and a goose quill sharpened at the end. To dry the ink he sprinkled the page with sand.

Washington Irving remained in Mr. Romaine's school until he was fourteen, and during those years he grew more and more imaginative and adventuresome. He liked to explore the town. He saw the ships come and go in the harbor. He heard the sea-



men talking of faraway lands. He saw the post draw up in front of Fraunces Tavern to discharge its passengers. Soon the coachman would climb back up on top of the coach, whip up the horses, and the coach would be off again—to a distant American city called Boston.

From the moment he learned to read, Washington Irving loved books. Not the books required at school but books full of adventure and travel. *Sinbad the Sailor* was one of his favorites. *Robinson Crusoe* was another. Both were stories of travel into strange lands far away. He read them in every spare moment—in school hidden behind his schoolbooks,

up in his room late at night, burning forbidden candles.

“Have you ever thought of being a sailor and going to sea?” he asked his brothers.

They shook their heads. They had other ideas for themselves.

“I must train myself for the life of a sailor,” Washington Irving decided.

Sailors ate salt pork and slept on hard planks. So Washington tried eating some salt pork. It almost didn’t go down at all. At night he slipped out of his bed and lay on the floor. The floor grew harder and harder, and he had to climb back into bed.

“Perhaps I can afford to go to sea as a passenger someday,” he decided. “That will be more comfortable.”

Washington became more mischievous, probably because his father was so strict. The roof of his house was a challenge that he couldn’t resist; so were the chimneys that carried off the smoke from the fireplaces. Out of a second-story window and onto the roof—up the steep slope to the top—along the edge to the roof next door—and then! Out of his pocket came stones, and he dropped them down the chimney, knowing full well that they would go banging and bouncing into the fireplace and startle the neighbors out of their wits. It was a

prank he never became tired of until he finally outgrew it.

The pranks multiplied until at last Mrs. Irving had to say in despair, "Oh, Washington! If you were only good."

There was one prank that he never did outgrow—the theater. It grew to be a major adventure.

When he was only ten, Washington was given a part in a school play. Of course, all that Mr. Romaine intended was to teach his students to appreciate good literature, and to show their parents what a fine teaching job he was doing. The play they gave was about the ancient Romans.

The students practiced their parts, and all went well at rehearsals. The day of the performance Washington Irving was standing backstage, waiting for his turn to go on—eating a piece of gooey honey cake. Up came his cue, and there he was—out on the stage with his mouth stuffed with cake. He solved the emergency quickly by spitting it out into his hand, delivering his oration, and then cramming the lovely stuff back into his mouth. The audience rocked with laughter.

Washington didn't seem to suffer too much from the laughter. But he did remember what an adventure it had been to have a part in a play and be on the stage.

That same year a new friend—Jim Paulding of Tarrytown, New York—came into his life, and led him into an even bigger experience with the stage. Jim was Washington's brother-in-law, because his oldest brother William had married Jim's sister Julia. William and Julia Irving decided to live in New York City. Since the best schools were in New York, Julia's young brother, Jim, soon came down from Tarrytown to stay with her. Jim Paulding and Washington Irving became best friends right away.

Jim was four-and-a-half years older than Washington and much wiser in the ways of the world.

"Haven't you ever *been* to a real theater?" Jim asked one day.

"None of my family goes to the theater," Washington told him. "My father thinks it's wicked."

"All the more reason. Come on!"

Washington's heart was beating fast when he found himself standing in front of the John Street Theater. Since Jim was bolder, he went to the box office to buy their tickets.

"It can't be so very wicked," Washington kept saying to himself. "After all, George Washington came here to see a show right after his inauguration."

The building on the outside seemed plain enough—just a wooden structure painted red—but inside!

The boys way up in the gallery—in the cheapest seats, of course—could look down on a glorious sight. The place was ablaze with lights—candles and oil lamps—two big chandeliers hanging from the ceiling, a row of footlights across the stage.

Young Irving gazed around him, entranced. He held his breath as the curtain went up. When real actors and actresses came out on the stage and began to play their parts, he thought he had never watched anything so wonderful. They wore elegant clothes. They moved about with magnificent gestures, and their voices were rich and clear. They made him believe every word. He felt as though he were peeking into a real life scene and watching a true romance.

Jim Paulding chuckled to see how excited Washington had become.

When they came out of the theater, Washington was so excited that he began to talk a blue streak, not making much sense. It had been a fairyland, a whole world of make-believe, where all that anyone needed was imagination.

“I’m glad you liked it,” said Jim Paulding. “Let’s go often.”

“Oh, yes!” Washington agreed. “Let’s!”

And he was able to manage it, all as innocent as you please! And his father none the wiser. He could go to the theater after dinner, see most of the per-

formance, and be back in the house in time for evening prayers. Then up to his room, out of the window, and back for the close of the show.

He soon discovered that he loved music as well. He managed to buy himself a flute and take lessons on it. Flutes were very popular in those days. He admired all the arts, even dancing.

"Father is bound to find out!" Peter warned him.

"Yes!" Ebenezer, John and Sarah all agreed, and they added, "You know that being the youngest won't do you a bit of good when it's anything so serious."

"I can't help it," said Washington. "These are the things I like best. You're all doing what you like."

It was true. Peter was studying medicine, and John was planning to be a lawyer. William was a merchant.

New York was full of the arts in those days. There were concerts at the coffee houses, and grand balls at the taverns. In the summertime when the theater was closed, Ricketts's Circus showed in a building on Greenwich Street, not far from the Battery. The circus was another kind of thrill—daring horseback riders, tumbling clowns, tight-rope walkers, trained dogs and seals.

Washington's oldest brothers and sisters tried to look after him since he was the baby. The youngest

ones understood his adventuresome ideas a little better.

“What are you going to be?” they often asked.

“Oh, I don’t know.”

“You’ll have to decide soon.”

“There isn’t any hurry,” he said with a shrug.

“I thought you were going to run away to sea,” said Sarah.

“No; when I travel, I plan to travel like a gentleman.”

Actually, Washington was beginning to show a real flair for writing. At school he was usually praised for his themes, while arithmetic was a subject he could never master.

He raised a real commotion around school with his first poem, a jingle to poke fun at a classmate who was desperately in love. He ought to have remembered that the classmate was bigger than he. For the boys taunted the victim so cruelly that at last he went looking for Washington Irving.

“See here, you!” he called out, and let fly at the poet with his fists.

Washington tried to stand his ground, but he was no match for his attacker, and he had to take quite a trouncing.

His next poem was launched with more dignity. It was published in a little magazine called the *Weekly Museum*.

Sleepy Hollow

Chapter

Three

*H*aving something pub-

lished in an adult magazine struck a real spark in Washington Irving. What must it be like to be published all the time? What must it be like to be *known* as a writer? His excitement began to mount. What must it be like—and he held his breath—to be the person who created a *Sinbad the Sailor* or a *Robinson Crusoe*? Every book, no matter how exciting or adventuresome, had to be written by somebody.

He composed more poetry but soon lost interest in that kind of writing. The theater had bigger opportunities for imagination. He tried writing plays, but he didn't get very far with them. Essays seemed to be the kind of thing he did best.

Essays were fashionable in that century, and essay writing was considered a fine art. They were published in newspapers and magazines and col-

lected into books. Important writers of the day produced essays on such subjects as man, life, morals, manners, customs, art, philosophy—practically anything. A well-educated gentleman was supposed to be able to turn out a nicely polished essay for any special occasion.

Washington's essays were few and far between during his early teens. Writing was hard work, and he was lazy. Having something published tickled his conceit, but not quite enough. He loved to muse and wander about, and his wanderlust took him farther and farther away from home. A couple of blocks north of the John Street Theater the paved streets ended, and pigs wallowed in the dirt and mud. Beyond that the open fields and woods of Manhattan Island began.

He and Jim Paulding, rifles under their arms, could wander along the Bowery, a dirt road then, and spend the day hunting squirrels in the woods of the island. Or they wandered along the banks of the wide, deep Hudson.

"You should see the Hudson River at Tarrytown," Jim Paulding told him. "It's so wide there that the Dutch have named it the Tappan Zee."

"Maybe my family will let me go," said Irving suddenly.

"Oh, say! Maybe they will."

Excited and chattering about the idea of a holi-

day in Tarrytown, Washington pleaded with his mother first.

"You're only fifteen," she protested.

"That's old!" declared Washington. "And Jim is nearly five years older, and we'd be with his family. If William can marry his sister, why can't I spend a vacation with him?"

Events worked in his favor. When the warm weather set in, there began to be signs around New York of a yellow fever epidemic; and suddenly it seemed wise to send the two boys to Westchester until the danger was past.



In a great bustle of packing—chiefly his hunting rifle—he and James Paulding were placed upon the Albany stagecoach.

They were out of town in no time, and into the woods, passing an occasional farm, until they came to the village of Harlem, where the coach drew up at the inn for more passengers. A ferry took them across the Harlem River, and they were soon on their way again, into the Westchester region. The land grew hilly. Brooks flowed through little valleys into the Hudson River. The road was rough, in some places no more than a trail through the woods. They jounced and bounced.

“We’ll soon be there,” said Jim. “It’s about thirty miles.”

The post road went right through the center of the village of Tarrytown. First the coach crossed the Penny Bridge and then it came to the handful of houses strung along each side of the road.

“Here we are!” said Jim, and they clambered down as soon as the horses stopped.

Washington Irving looked around him. A real Dutch village! People strolling about and chatting in Dutch, houses made of stone with the same steep roofs as those in New York, and doors divided across the middle so that they could be opened a half at a time.

The Pauldings were one of the old Dutch fam-

ilies in the region, substantial folk in Westchester. Jim's first cousin, John Paulding, had been one of the three men who had captured the spy, Major André, during the Revolution.

In the evening Washington Irving sat with the family around the table or in front of the fireplace, while they read to each other or conversed. He heard many Dutch legends that were new to him. In the daytime he and Jim wandered through the woods and dales, rifles under their arms, searching for game, finding their way along the edges of brooks. One day they came to another village, a quiet little place, where nothing seemed to stir.

"This is Sleepy Hollow," Jim told him. "There's a legend that this village is under a spell. It really is haunted."

Washington Irving stared at Jim with wide eyes.

"What spell? Who haunts it?"

"There are many stories. Some say an old German doctor bewitched it in the earliest Colonial days. Others say that an Indian chieftain cast a spell over it. Anyway, mysterious things happen here. At night there are strange voices in the air and music coming from nowhere. Villagers sometimes go into trances."

"Has anyone ever seen a ghost here?"

"Oh, yes! There's the Headless Horseman. On certain nights, when the moon is right, a man gal-

lops through on a great steed. He's supposed to be the ghost of a Hessian soldier whose head was shot off in the Revolution."

Washington Irving had stopped breathing.

"He's buried in the Sleepy Hollow graveyard," said Jim, "and he rides out at night in search of his head. You're liable to see him anywhere."

Irving could feel the mystery of the village. It was making him drowsy. There was definitely some kind of spell in the air, because his legs moved so slowly. And there did seem to be whisperings. Perhaps the Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow would ride as far as Tarrytown while he was there.

The holiday soon ended, and Washington returned home with a more serious case of wanderlust than before he'd tasted real travel. The thought of spending years and years in classrooms was almost more than he could bear. At fourteen he had changed from Mr. Romaine's school to another on John Street belonging to Mr. Josiah Henderson. The following winter he had gone to Jonathan Fisk's school in Beekman Street.

"Mr. Fisk is a splendid teacher," Deacon Irving had remarked at the time. "He can bring you up in your studies so that you can enter Columbia College."

Columbia seemed like a logical place for Washington Irving, since his brothers had gone there.

But Washington Irving simply did not want to go to college. He decided to have it out with his father.

"You can't just loll and lounge around," said the deacon. "Would you like to begin working in my store?"

No, he didn't like that idea, and he hadn't yet thought of earning a living at writing. He didn't care for medicine. Well, perhaps he would take up law, like his brother John.

"Very well," said the deacon. "You can go into Henry Masterton's law office as an apprentice."

John Irving was studying in the same office; the two brothers would be together.

That winter—in a dry-as-dust law office, copying legal papers and doing chores—was the longest winter that Washington Irving had ever endured. Summer would have to come eventually, and perhaps then he could have another holiday with Jim in Tarrytown. But why just Tarrytown? His sister Ann and her husband Richard Dodge were living in Johnstown, way up beyond Albany on the Mohawk River. And his sister Catherine had married Daniel Paris and had moved to Johnstown too. Why not visit both families?

Washington Irving didn't really think he could get away with it, but he was certainly going to try. He'd start with his brother William, who was now a sensible, middle-aged man in his thirties. William

had been up along the Mohawk on fur-trading trips.

"Do you think you still feel young enough to travel?" he asked William.

"Oh, I think so," said William with a smile.

Washington told him of his idea.

"I've got to see more of the world, William. I've just got to."

He could tell that William was beginning to like the idea, and he said, "Ann and Catherine must be awfully lonely for us!"

It turned out that William had been thinking of another trading trip to the Mohawk Valley anyway. Well, why not take Washington with him?

At first Mrs. Irving gasped at the idea of a seventeen-year-old boy going so far into the wilderness.

"That's the frontier!" she said.

She gave in though. She realized that William was sensible and reliable, and not at all a dreamer like Washington.

Washington's mouth was so dry he couldn't even swallow when he heard his father and William begin to discuss the arrangements.

"You will have to go by boat," the deacon said to William.

"Yes," William agreed. "We can no doubt engage passage on one of the river sloops. I'll have a talk with one or two captains that I know."

Great Rivers

Chapter

Four

The Irving household

lived in a state of continuous turmoil—except when Washington was asleep—until the day of departure arrived. The greatest single piece of confusion was packing Washington's trunk. He began the task long before passage was arranged, throwing in every sort of thing.

Mrs. Irving knew all of her boys well, and she just let Washington work off his excitement. Then she said, "Perhaps I had better check to make sure you have everything." So the trunk was carefully unpacked and repacked. Mrs. Irving had to unpack and repack his trunk several times before she was able to take out everything that he did not need and put in everything that he did.

William and Washington went aboard a sloop belonging to a Dutch captain from Albany. It was a sailing vessel with a single mast and fore and aft

rigging. The crew members were Negro slaves owned by the captain.

The coming and going of the river boats always drew a crowd to the dock. The boats carried cargo and mail as well as passengers. Stevedores trotted up and down the gangplank with kegs and bundles on their shoulders. Friends of the passengers crowded the pier to wave and cheer.

"At length the sloop actually got under way," Irving wrote about it in later years. "As she worked slowly out of the dock into the stream, there was a great exchange of last words between friends on board and friends on shore, and much waving of handkerchiefs when the sloop was out of hearing."

Washington Irving stood at the rail. At last he was to find out where this great river came from. At last he was going to see the wild forests of upper New York State and penetrate into real Indian country. Of all the books he had read, none told him anything about the Hudson River Valley. Books always seemed to be about the countries of Europe.

He and William would not reach Albany for two days, since navigation on the upper portions of the Hudson was dangerous and the sloop had to come to anchor at dark.

Slowly, ever so slowly, New York and New Jersey slid by, as a gentle breeze filled the sail of the sloop and carried her northward. The day was warm

and a little hazy, and Washington lolled about or lay on his back on the deck. This was the life!

He was familiar with the scenery up as far as Westchester—the Palisades along the New Jersey side, the deep, wide lake called Tappan Zee that the river formed near Tarrytown. Beyond that it was completely new. The Hudson became narrower, and the hills grew higher and closer to the river's edge, until it was only a half a mile wide by the time the sloop reached Stony Point.

The sloop was almost at the Highlands when it cast anchor for the night. Next morning it was on its way again, as soon as the tide began to come up the river. All the second day Washington Irving watched a spectacle of the most beautiful scenery he had ever beheld: forest-covered hills that grew higher and steeper, cut by the sharp valleys of small rivers.

“After we pass Poughkeepsie, you'll see the real mountains,” William told him. “The Catskills.”

“Of all the scenery of the Hudson,” Irving wrote, “the Catskill Mountains had the most witching effect on my boyish imagination. Never shall I forget the effect upon me of the first view of them predominating over a wide extent of country, part wild, woody, and rugged; part softened away into all the graces of cultivation. As we slowly floated along, I lay on the deck and watched them through

a long summer's day; undergoing a thousand mutations under the magical effect of atmosphere; sometimes seeming to approach; at other times to recede; now almost melting into hazy distance, now burnished by the setting sun. . . .”

Imagine Henry Hudson sailing up this river in the *Half Moon*. There had been no white settlers at all then. No New York, no Tarrytown, no dottings of farmhouses, no Albany; only the Algonquin tribes along the Hudson and the Iroquois tribes along the Mohawk. Imagine, imagine, imagine!

Early next day, when the sloop was approaching Albany, William and Washington watched it come into sight. Albany was larger than Washington had expected—several hundred houses, many of their owners wealthy. The fur trade and the lumber business had made Albany grow.

The Irving brothers put up at an inn for the night, and early next morning they climbed into a hired wagon and were on their way. They jogged along, on up the west bank of the Hudson some seven miles, until they came to the point where the Mohawk flows into the Hudson. Then they turned westward.

“How far will we get today?” Washington asked.

“We'll stop for the night at Schenectady,” William told him.

They stopped long enough to watch Cohoes Falls

as it foamed and rushed down its seventy-foot drop, then they rumbled on through the mountainous forest, following the Mohawk River. Here and there they passed farms and fields of corn in open, flat places. Late in the day they reached Schenectady. Washington sat straight up on the wagon seat. Schenectady was much larger than he had realized, though not quite as large as Albany, and there were some lovely brick houses.

"This is good country up through here," William told him.

They were on their way early next morning, jogging westward, until they left the Mohawk and turned northward. Johnstown was seven or eight miles north of the river. Their wagon attracted the attention of some youngsters even before it reached the town.

"Do you know the Dodges and the Parises?" William asked them, and without answering the children ran off toward the town.

By the time the Irving brothers drove through the main street there was a small crowd waiting to greet them. Washington recognized his sisters in the group, and he jumped down into a host of cousins. Ann Dodge had four children. Catherine Paris had married much more recently; she only had one.

The excitement of their arrival soon died down,

and Washington was free to go exploring into the new territory: the little town and the surrounding forests that had so recently belonged to the Mohawk Indians.

After his holiday in Johnstown, Washington Irving was a changed lad. His love of travel was stronger, and his willingness to work at his law studies weaker. He changed law offices twice in the next two years, finally becoming a clerk with Josiah Hoffman, a prominent attorney in New York. He was soon friends with the whole Hoffman family. Josiah Hoffman had two daughters, Ann and Matilda. Ann was grown, but Matilda was only ten in 1802. Both Hoffman girls were cheerful and full of fun, and Washington Irving spent a lot of time with them.

Washington's health seemed to be failing as he approached his twenties. He developed a chronic cough, and he lacked energy.

"That may be why he doesn't have any ambition," said his mother.

Somehow he could find enough energy to write an occasional essay. He still liked writing, and he liked to see his essays in the *Morning Chronicle*, signed with the name Jonathan Oldstyle. They were witty comments, sometimes rather sharp, about the theater, about society around New York City. The

Morning Chronicle was new, and Peter Irving was its editor for about three years. Peter had lost interest in medicine.

Washington and Peter Irving were becoming close companions, even though Peter was almost eleven years older. Their tastes were very similar. They were both interested in the arts. Washington, Peter, and Jim Paulding were stylish members of a dashing set of young men about town. Washington, especially, looked very handsome in his neatly fitting coat with cutaway tails, breeches, and tall hat. He was only five-feet-seven, but he carried himself well. And he had chestnut hair and gray eyes. He went to the theater often, sitting in more expensive seats, adventuring backstage to meet important actors and actresses. He was very popular at parties because he was so witty and clever and charming.

The summer that Washington was twenty, Mr. Hoffman called him into his office one day for a conference.

"You know, of course, that I own land on the St. Lawrence River," Mr. Hoffman began, and Irving nodded.

"The trade between Canada and the United States is developing rapidly," Mr. Hoffman went on while Irving listened politely. "I've decided to make a journey up into Canada myself to look at my

lands. I'm planning to lay out a township and look into the possibilities of the fur trade. Mr. Ludlow Ogden has lands up there too, and he is going with me."

A trip all the way up to Canada, thought Irving-with-the-wanderlust.

"Now," said Mr. Hoffman. "I shall need the services of a law clerk. Do you think you can go with me?"

Could he! Irving stared happily; his pulse raced; his imagination began to work overtime. New scenes! New themes for writing! He must keep a diary of the whole thing.

Once more Washington had the whole Irving household in a turmoil with his excitement over packing and getting ready for the trip. He was actually going into a foreign country! He was going into regions that were still true wilderness! He put sturdy clothes into his trunk for that, but his brothers watched suspiciously as he also packed fancy clothes. When he laid his flute gently in among his things, they demanded an explanation.

"Well, you see," said Washington, blushing just a little, "Mr. Hoffman is making up a large party. Mrs. Hoffman and his daughter Ann are going, and a Mr. and Mrs. Ludlow Ogden and their daughter Eliza. We'll probably stop at Ballston Springs."

“Not Matilda?”

“Not this time. She’s really only a child.”

On the last day of July, Irving, the Hoffmans, and the Ogdens went aboard a Hudson River sloop, and the voyage up the Hudson was gay and sociable. At Albany they all stayed at the Tontine Coffee House for a few days, taking short jaunts to Ballston Springs and Saratoga Springs. Washington Irving excelled with his dancing ability and his good spirits and made himself very popular with all the ladies.

They were a happy crowd of travelers as they left Albany in wagons, following the Mohawk River to Utica.

Washington was the star entertainer. When they stopped in the evening he played his flute, and sometimes Mrs. Hoffman sang along with him. As they rode over the trails he sat on the wagon seat beside one of the ladies, reading Shakespeare’s plays with gestures and feeling. Once he and Ann Hoffman did several scenes together from *Romeo and Juliet*, while the wagon wheels rolled over stumps and rocks.

They reached Utica on Sunday, and they rested for a day and went to church. Early Monday morning Washington Irving found the men were up first, looking at one another a little furtively.

“This will be the roughest part of the trip,” they

told him. "We hope the ladies will take it well."

They were turning exactly northward through upper New York to the St. Lawrence River. There would be no more fashionable vacation hotels and town inns, only log cabins and frontier shacks. The road grew worse as they traveled along. Often they had to get out and walk beside the wagons. The ladies looked at the mud caked around the bottoms of their long skirts and looked at each other.

"As soon as we reach the Black River we can travel in boats," the men promised them.

That night they stopped at a place which Washington Irving jotted down in his notebook as "a very decent log house tavern." They were on their way again at daylight, and no breakfast until about ten o'clock when they reached another tavern. They pushed on, and when they stopped for the night, the next tavern keeper told them,

"The high falls of the Black River is only about a mile and a half from here."

The passage that Washington Irving wrote into his notebook is the best possible description of what he and the Hoffmans and the Ogdens found when they came to the Black River:

"The road was rugged. We had to walk most of the way. But we were repaid by the unexpected beauty of the scenery on our first view of the river. We emerged from a thick woods onto the banks on

our right. We were surprised with a beautiful sheet of water dashing down a mass of rocks from the



height of between forty and fifty feet. The water pours through a chasm of about eight or ten feet wide and pitching about two feet immediately spreads into a broad and foaming sheet. The river below is broad and tranquil."

They all got into a scow that Mr. Hoffman had ordered in advance, and floated down the curving river. At times there was an archway of trees over



their heads. But as the boatmen poled them along it began to pour—torrents of rain. They followed the river as far as they could, and that night—wet and bedraggled—they had to stop in their worst quarters so far. They nicknamed their place the “Temple of Dirt,” and tried not to notice the fleas.

The last sixty miles of their journey had to be in carts pulled by oxen, because the road was too muddy and boggy for horses. Stones, ruts, stumps, fallen logs! Mud, flies, mosquitoes, rain! Four days to cover sixty miles!

At last they reached the bank of a river and stopped.

“This is the Oswegatchie River; it flows into the St. Lawrence. Where the two rivers meet is our destination, the village of Oswegatchie,” said Mr. Ogden. Oswegatchie is called Ogdensburg today.

On the other side of the river they saw fresh saddle horses for the men and a wagon for the ladies and luggage. And there was a raft waiting to take them across.

Washington Irving was an incurable traveler. He was worn and battered and tired and dirty, but it didn’t matter. He was seeing the world! He and his friends pushed on, following the Oswegatchie River. Irving tried to see everything and remember everything, and now and again, especially at the

end of each day, long descriptions went into his notebook.

At last they reached the end of the forest, and Irving gazed ahead of him, looking at the place where the blackish waters of the Oswegatchie River flowed into the blue waters of the St. Lawrence. The two rivers formed a point of land, and on the point was the village of Oswegatchie. It was hardly a village—just an old French fort partly in ruins, a few houses, a sawmill with a dam across the river, and a grist mill. The travelers moved into the inhabitable part of the old fort.

As soon as the wagons were unloaded, Washington Irving—adventurer and romanticist—rushed to the bank of the St. Lawrence and looked up and down its vast stretches. What magnificent country! What historic country! Explored and settled by the French missionaries and fur traders. There were Indian villages all around, and he meant to visit them.

Everything was so grand and silent and solitary here! He would never forget this wild, lovely country.

But he was not on a pleasure trip. He was here to assist his employer in laying out the land grants and drawing up deeds and other legal papers. But Washington Irving was never a slave to his job. He found

time to take long walks with the Hoffman and Ogden ladies, and to paddle up and down the St. Lawrence in Indian canoes. The canoes were the long, slim, brightly painted birchbarks used by the Algonquins and Chippewas, light as a feather when they had to be carried overland, strong as steel when they carried cargoes and passengers.

When Mr. Hoffman's and Mr. Ogden's affairs were settled at Oswegatchie and other nearby places, the whole party prepared to go on to Montreal—down the St. Lawrence in canoes, manned by skillful Indian paddlers.

As Washington Irving sat in the bow of one of the canoes—exactly in the center as he'd been taught very young—holding on to the two sides, his eyes sparkled with excitement. There were rapids ahead, miles of rapids.

The travelers glided along in calm water for about five miles. Then suddenly ahead of him Irving could see white water. The river grew narrower, and soon they were in it. The water churned and swirled over hidden reefs and boulders. Only skilled navigators could take them through this. The canoe bounced and fought, shuddered and swayed. Waves came up over the bow and sprayed Irving's face. The surface of the river was covered with whitecaps and whirlpools and swells. Small islands made the going even more dangerous. The

canoes shot along in a twenty-mile-an-hour current for nine miles, the Long Sault, the most dangerous stretch of all.

At last the canoes slowed down and moved along in smooth water, where the St. Lawrence widened into Lake St. Francis. There were dense forests on either side.

Soon they entered the Cedar Rapids, that churned and boiled for nearly ten miles. Sometimes the canoes were in the center of the river, sometimes they skirted the bank, so close that Irving could reach out and touch the overhanging branches.

Once more the St. Lawrence grew smooth and wide, and Washington knew this was the portion called Lake St. Louis. They were nearing their goal. Here the Ottawa River, flowing down from the north, joined the St. Lawrence. Here the long island, called Montreal Island, stood in the wide, deep river. The canoes passed along to the right of the island, and the first town Irving saw was Lachine. One more short set of rapids to shoot—the Lachine Rapids—and at last they reached smooth water. There was the town of Montreal on the southern end of Montreal Island. Its little houses—here and there a spire—were huddled along the shore, and high behind the town rose the mountain peak, Mount Royal.

They all stepped ashore, with a happy sigh of re-

lief. Washington Irving knew what he would find in Montreal—fur, fur, more fur—and trappers and fur traders and more trappers and fur traders—Indians, Frenchmen, Englishmen. The partners of the North West Fur Company expected Mr. Hoffman and his party, and had arranged comfortable quarters and a welcoming banquet. The town of Montreal was just as French as Albany and New York were Dutch. There was Notre Dame Church, fieldstone houses, narrow streets, and the market square.

Washington Irving soon met up with another New Yorker in Montreal, a young man about his age named Henry Brevoort. Brevoort was in Canada on a mission for his uncle, John Jacob Astor, who traded in furs and had a shop in New York City.

“You must do a lot of traveling,” Irving said to Brevoort with admiration.

“Definitely,” Brevoort told him. “I travel all over this region and the West buying pelts from the Indians. Then I ship them down to Mr. Astor.”

Irving and Brevoort were close friends for the rest of their lives.

Off to Europe

Chapter

Five

*I*rving had stood the rigors of the journey into the Canadian wilderness pretty well. But once he was back in New York—especially when the cold, damp weather set in—his health grew worse. He coughed his way through the winter; he lost his appetite; he grew much too thin. His whole family looked at him with alarm.

His brothers held a conference over Washington and his health.

“He won’t last much longer if we don’t do something,” they concluded.

“Travel seems to agree with him,” said Peter, and Ebenezer nodded his head.

“Perhaps a trip to Europe,” John began, half wishing he were ill enough to need one himself.

“He’s too young!” declared William.

Peter laughed. “Washington is twenty-one this spring, don’t forget. He seems young to you because you’re so much older than he.”

"I say he's very young," William insisted, "and something of a playboy. How he does love to dash about with writers and painters and theater folk, and flirt with girls, and not a serious thought in his head."

"You're being too severe," said Peter. "His friends are tremendously interesting, and he's an interesting and attractive fellow himself."

The Irving brothers came to an agreement. They would all pitch in and give Washington a trip to Europe. Washington had never loved his brothers quite so much as at that moment.

Of course, there was the usual crowd at the dock to see him off—the Hoffmans, Jim Paulding, and his other dashing friends, and his family. The Irving group had increased by one, because Washington's sister Sarah had recently married Henry Van Wart.

Irving's courage failed as soon as he was aboard the ship. He didn't really want to leave. How could he ever get on by himself? Europe was so far away! While he leaned against the ship's rail, he suddenly noticed Matilda Hoffman on the dock. She was only twelve, but she was growing prettier. He had promised to write her some long letters.

Ships were not as comfortable then as they are now. Washington Irving was in a cabin with sixteen other passengers. When the ship finally stood

out to sea, it began to pitch and roll, and he felt pretty dismal until he got used to it.

"I looked around me, saw none but strange faces. . . . I passed a melancholy, lonesome day, turned into my berth at night sick at heart, and lay for hours thinking of the friends I had left behind."

Irving's bad moods never lasted long. His charm began to show results, and the journey grew pleasanter. He made friends with both passengers and crew. He even learned to climb to the masthead and shinny out on the main topsail yard.

After six weeks of nothing but water for scenery, the first sight of land sent his pulse up.

"It's Spain!" someone told him.

He looked and looked at the Spanish coast. His homesickness had long since vanished. He was traveling to new lands! He was determined to make great volumes of notes and journals of everything he saw and experienced. He might want to use the material someday. He might need it for those essays he was determined to write.

Bordeaux, France, was to be his first European city, and he watched for it eagerly. The ship eased her way up the coast and into the harbor of the Garonne River.

He stood with the crowd of passengers waiting for a sight of the city that was more than fifty miles up the river.



“There it is,” said someone, pointing.

Irving found himself looking at a big, prosperous shipping center whose buildings stretched all along the water front. Most of them were flat-roofed. The tall, slim twin spires of a cathedral rose above everything else. The river in front of the city bristled with the masts of sailing ships.

He could hardly wait to get ashore, and some of his fellow passengers found his excitement very entertaining.

“Is this your first trip abroad?” asked one.

“Yes,” he admitted. “But it won’t be my last!”

As soon as his luggage was settled in a hotel room, Irving set out, exploring the city on foot. It was an ancient city. In the old part of the town there were old little houses and quaint inns on narrow streets. All about him the passers-by, the street vendors, jostled him along, chattering in a language that he could not understand.

“I must learn to speak French!” he determined, and started to study the language right away.

The modern part of Bordeaux was more to his taste, and the Grand Théâtre became his favorite haunt. He spent the rest of his time going to other theaters and the art galleries and visiting the cathedrals.

The second city he planned to visit was Marseilles on the Mediterranean coast, and he set out from

Bordeaux to Marseilles in a closed carriage or diligence. Whenever the diligence stopped in a town, the young and handsome Monsieur Irving hopped off to practice his French, usually with young ladies. His French was so wrong at that point that it made them giggle.

But life in France in 1804 was not always simple for a traveler. Napoleon Bonaparte had risen to a position of great power, and the French people were talking of making him emperor. Napoleon had most of the countries in Europe alarmed, and Great Britain was already at war with France.

Irving never gave very much thought to politics, but he couldn't very well avoid it as he traveled through France. Sometimes he had to spend long hours getting his papers straightened out. Sometimes he was treated with suspicion because he was a foreigner.

But in one town where the diligence stopped, he was amazed and overwhelmed by the attention he received from a group of young ladies. They gathered around *le pauvre garçon*, the poor young man, cooing sympathy and stuffing his pockets with food. Then Irving noticed a twinkle in the eye of one of the diligence passengers.

“What did you tell these ladies about me?” asked Irving.

“Oh,” the other man laughed, “I told them you

were an English prisoner, destined to be shot or hanged or something."

Irving's first glimpse of the Mediterranean, the white stucco houses with their red tile roofs, the orange trees, the palms, the olive groves, all told him he was going to live a long, long time—if only to enjoy more of this. How vivid and blue and sparkling the Mediterranean was in the bright sun!

Marseilles was a seaport, and many of the residents were fisherfolk who went out early in the morning in every kind of sailboat and returned at night with their catches of fish. Bigger ships traded with Africa.

After Irving had explored Marseilles—especially the theaters—he traveled along the Mediterranean coast, planning to go to Italy. Relations between France and Italy were strained, and when he reached the city of Nice, close to the Italian border, he found himself in passport trouble.

"We will have to detain you, Monsieur," said one official.

"Why?" he wanted to know.

"Your papers, Monsieur. They must be checked."

He had to wait a whole month in Nice while the red tape was cleared before he could go on to Italy. Finally, with a sigh of relief, he went on across the

border to Genoa, Italy. At Genoa he went aboard a sailing packet bound for Messina in Sicily.

Letter after letter had been going home—to his brothers, to Ann and Matilda Hoffman, to Henry Brevoort, to Jim Paulding.

“This ship was formerly a Charleston packet and has excellent accommodations,” he wrote to William, “. . . I am now hastening to those scenes of romance and poetic fiction which the ancients so much delighted in, and even thought them worthy of being the favorite haunts of gods. Sicily, you know, is one of the particular spots of mythologic events . . .”

But later in the voyage he wrote his brother William a very different sort of report, just after they had passed the island of Elba.

“I was sitting in the cabin yesterday writing very tranquilly, when word was brought that a sail was seen coming off towards us from the island. The Genoese captain, after regarding it through a spy-glass, turned pale, and said it was one of those privateers . . .”

It certainly was! The excited passengers rushed to the rail to watch the wartime pirates overhaul them and come aboard. Irving and all of the others had to leave their own ship and go aboard the privateer—at gun point.

Why? they wanted to know. For questioning, they were told. Of course, that was just an excuse. They were really being robbed.

“When we arrived on board the privateer I own my heart almost failed me,” Irving wrote. “A more villainous-looking crew I never beheld. Their dark complexions, rough beards, and fierce black eyes scowling under enormous bushy eyebrows, gave a character of the greatest ferocity to their countenances. They were as rudely accoutred as their comrades that had boarded us, and like them, armed with cutlasses, stilettoes and pistols.”

Irving enjoyed writing his account of the pirates. He went into great detail about being searched for money and at last being allowed to return to his own ship. Writing wasn’t hard when you had something full of action to write about. In fact, writing was becoming more and more gratifying.

When the ship finally reached Messina, Irving had another adventure to fashion into a story.

“You are under quarantine,” Irving and his companions were informed by the port authorities.

“Why?” the passengers protested. “We have no sickness on board, and we came from a healthy port.”

“Your ship’s log shows that you were boarded by pirates!” they were told. “We can’t take any chances. Who knows where they were last?”

So Washington and the others were prisoners aboard ship for twenty-one days. He read; he wrote; he read; he wrote. For exercise he walked the deck, around and around and around. He got very tired of watching the beautiful blue Mediterranean sparkle in the sun and slap and splash around the ship.

The "prisoners" were finally released, and Irving toured all over the island of Sicily. Then he went back to Italy, to the city of Naples. Mount Vesuvius, still active, glowing red at night, emitting an immense column of smoke, completely captured his imagination. It was a legend come to life. He joined a tour party climbing to the top—at night.

"We had a tremendous view of the crater," he wrote. "We approached near enough to the hot lava to thrust our walking sticks into it."

He held a piece of the lava rock in his hand, trying to imagine how it must have felt to be living there when the lava came pouring down, molten hot, burying houses and people in the lost city of Pompeii. It made him realize that a writer must understand a great deal about life, much more than he could ever hope to experience.

"Where do you go from here?" another traveler asked him.

"Rome is my next stop," said Irving. "Then Paris."

Irving would have agreed with anyone who said that Rome was a beautiful city with her wide, lovely plazas, gleaming white buildings. The Forum and the Colosseum made the ancient Romans come to life. He gazed for a long time at the great dome of St. Peter's church, designed by Michelangelo. But . . .

Paris was really *the* city, he decided the minute he arrived there. Paris was, in fact, the biggest city in the world, with more than half a million people. New York had only about sixty thousand inhabitants at that time.

"Paris is fashionable!" Irving declared almost at once. "I need some new clothes if I'm to look right."

He hunted up a tailor, a shirtmaker, and a bootmaker, and at his room at the Hôtel de Richelieu he spent a lot of time in front of the mirror.

"My dear brother," he wrote to Peter. "You will excuse the shortness and hastiness of this letter, for which I can only plead as an excuse that *I am a young man and in Paris.*"

Paris teemed with activities for an artistic young man. The Louvre was full of paintings, and there were the Tuilleries Gardens—and there were the theaters. At the Paris Opéra he saw the play, *Alceste*, and noted in his journal "music superb, dancing exquisitely fine." At the Théâtre Français he saw the great French actor, François Talma, in *The*

Tragedy of the Templars. Other nights he went to the Théâtre Vaudeville, the Théâtre Jeunes Comédiens, and many more.

As he sat watching the artists, he realized that they were the people he really wanted to know. But who was *he* to meet *them*? Washington Irving began to want to be important—really important—important enough to meet François Talma. During his four months in Paris he met a host of interesting people, but there weren't any Talmas among them. They were just carefree young fellows like himself.

By the time Washington Irving reached London, he was becoming weary of traveling and seeing new places.

“Thank heaven my ramblings are nearly at an end, and in a little while I shall once more return to my friends, and sink again into tranquil domestic life,” he wrote to Peter.

He found lodgings on Norfolk Street, because it was close to the theaters, and he was off on another round of seeing the sights, making new friends, and going to the theaters. He watched one of the greatest actresses of the times, Mrs. Siddons, or Sarah Kemble Siddons, doing Shakespeare, and once again he longed to be somebody so that he could meet people like Mrs. Siddons.

His homesickness grew worse, and after a little more than two months in London, he booked pas-

sage on a ship leaving the middle of January, 1806.

"A midwinter crossing will be rough and stormy," he was warned, but he paid no attention. He wanted to go home.

The passage was extremely rough, and the ship didn't put in at New York until nine weeks later. Washington Irving forgot the discomfort as soon as he saw his family and friends—all bundled up to their chins against the cold—on the pier to meet him.

Salmagundi

Chapter

Six

*“D*oesn’t he look fine!”

“Yes, indeed! The trip did him a world of good!” family and friends agreed.

Irving couldn’t help but agree with them. He *felt* fine.

“We think that you had better finish your law studies now and take your bar exam,” his brother William, his father, and Mr. Hoffman told him.

And Irving did. By the following November he had passed his bar exam.

“You can have desk space in my office,” said his brother John, who by now worked at Number 3 Wall Street, “until you can build up a practice.”

But the law practice was never built up. Two years abroad had made Washington Irving even more fashionable, amiable, and popular, much more of a social lion, than he had ever been before. The young set crowded around him to hear about Eu-

rope, about the theaters he had visited and the actors and actresses he had seen. Jim Paulding, his brother Peter, Henry Brevoort, the Hoffmans, and many more made a gay and happy crowd, and Washington Irving was the center, more cheerful and witty than ever—feeling just a little important. They gathered at one another's homes, or in the inns about town, or at the theater. They called themselves “The Lads of Kilkenny,” and soon so did everyone else.

These Lads of Kilkenny encouraged Irving to make something of himself; they made it clear that they expected great things of him. They praised all his quips and clever sayings and enjoyed reading everything he wrote. Writing was certainly the field for him, Irving decided.

Jim Paulding had writing ambitions too—and talent. He was clerking in a New York law office and had moved into William Irving's house permanently. It wasn't long before he and the two Irving brothers—Washington and William—were concocting a literary idea—a paper, really a pocket-sized magazine, containing witty essays. The authors called themselves Launcelot Langstaff, Anthony Evergreen, and William Wizard. The paper was called *Salmagundi; or, The Whim-Whams and Opinions of Launcelot Langstaff, Esq., and Others.*

The word “salmagundi” means a mixture or medley, and this was a mixture of witty and humorous articles—prose and poetry—on life in New York City: the theater, fashions, travel, politics, concerts, character sketches of prominent persons.

The first issue came out in January, 1807, and, much to the surprise of Messrs. Langstaff, Evergreen, and Wizard, it was a success and hundreds of copies were sold. With great excitement they planned more issues and brought out three in February, two in March, three in April, one in May.

“What wags! What wags!” said New Yorkers as they read *Salmagundi* and chuckled.

The Irvings and Paulding had made one mistake. They hadn’t bothered to copyright it, because they didn’t think it would be a financial success.

They and their publisher, David Longworth, had all agreed that *Salmagundi* would sell enough copies to earn the cost of printing it. But when Mr. Longworth said, “I think you had better have it copyrighted,” the gay young wags merely shrugged their shoulders. The publisher registered the copyright in his own name, and most of the profits went to him.

But to Washington Irving the money part was the least. In *Salmagundi* he was tasting success as a writer. He was seeing his stuff in print and reading

the praises of critics. He no longer wanted to be a writer someday; he *was* a writer. He grew more gay and carefree with each issue that came out.

Right in the middle of publishing *Salmagundi*, he received an invitation from friends of Aaron Burr to go to Richmond, Virginia, and observe Burr's trial for them. Burr's friends knew that the Irving's favored Burr's political views in many ways and did not always side with the group that followed Jefferson and Hamilton.

"We want you to go both as a lawyer and as a writer," Burr's friends told Irving. "Burr is so unpopular right now that we want somebody there who will take a sympathetic attitude. And people like you. If you publish anything about the trial people will read it."

Irving was off in a cloud of dust to Richmond. What more could a man ask? He was writing, traveling, observing a national event, discovering how charming and hospitable the Virginians could be.

Aaron Burr was to be tried for treason. He was accused of conspiring with other men in America, Britain, and Spain to have some of the Western states secede from the United States and form a separate country. The trial attracted a lot of attention, because Aaron Burr had been a prominent man for many years. He had been a hero in the Revolution and a prosperous lawyer in New York City.

after the war. Law drew him into politics. He was so popular in the early years of his life that in 1800 he ran for the Presidency. He and Thomas Jefferson received tie votes, and the House of Representatives chose Jefferson for President and Burr for Vice-President. But Burr's popularity turned to public wrath when he shot and killed Alexander Hamilton in a gun duel. The duel had been fair, but the public called it murder just the same. A few years later came the charge of treason, and that finished Burr's reputation.

Washington Irving spent two months in Richmond, living at the Swan Tavern, watching the trial during the day, writing his observations in letters to friends, discussing the trial with Burr's friends and enemies when he went visiting in the evening.

"I consider Burr as a man so fallen, so shorn of the power to do national injury, that I feel no sensation remaining but compassion for him," he wrote home to the Hoffmans.

Burr was calm and dignified throughout the trial, and when the jury finally acquitted him, he went to Europe until the ill feeling could die down.

Soon after Irving returned to New York his father, the deacon, took sick. The deacon had always been such a forceful personality around the house that his family found it hard to realize that he could

lie so still and meekly let others take care of him. His death, a few weeks later, left an acute sense of emptiness in their lives. He had been a devoted father even though he had been strict. Washington Irving particularly began to realize how much he had depended upon him.

"I shall continue to live in the house with Mother," Washington promised his brothers and sisters. "I really think it would disturb her too much to have to move. She's been in this house so long."

He and William and Jim Paulding got out a few more issues of *Salmagundi*, but they were all losing interest in it, and the project ended about a year after it had been started.

Washington was on fire with a newer and bigger literary idea. He and Peter were beginning to write a book together. It was to be called, *A History of New York, from the Beginnings of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty*, supposedly written by an imaginary character called Diedrich Knickerbocker. It was to be a humorous book, really a satire, poking fun at many old Dutch legends.

Washington was eager to finish the book, because he was beginning to appreciate the importance of earning money, or at least of being able to earn it. His interest in Matilda Hoffman had grown deeper and deeper. He was spending more and more time



with her. At sixteen she was a lovely young lady with big, dark eyes and a fragile quality. She liked the same things that Irving liked—poetry, literature, music, plays. Soon everyone realized that Washington and Matilda were in love and would no doubt marry as soon as she was old enough.

But Peter wasn't in love, and he wasn't as inter-

ested in the *Knickerbocker History* as Washington. Peter began to talk about taking a long vacation trip in Europe.

"It would be nice to see Sarah again," said Peter. Sarah Irving and her husband, Henry Van Wart, had moved to Birmingham, England. Soon Peter was on the high seas bound for England.

Washington Irving usually wandered from one job to another very easily, but this time he surprised Peter, and everyone else for that matter.

"I am going to write the *Knickerbocker History* myself," he announced.

Meanwhile, Mr. Hoffman, seeing that Irving was developing into a serious and reliable fellow, decided to make him a partner in his law firm.

"Washington is settling down at last!" sighed all the Irvings.

But it was not to be, because a tragedy that nobody expected changed everything.

Irving was working hard, catching up on his neglected law studies, writing his book. He visited Matilda every day, and she encouraged him to make something worthwhile of himself.

One day he called to find that she had a head cold. That wasn't remarkable, since it was toward the end of the winter when every second person in New York had a cold.

"Nothing was thought of it at first; but she grew

rapidly worse, and fell into a consumption. I cannot tell you what I suffered. The ills that I have undergone in this life, have been dealt out to me drop by drop, and I have tasted all their bitterness," Irving wrote later. "I saw her fade rapidly away; beautiful, and more beautiful . . . I was often by her bedside . . . Her malady was rapid in its career, and hurried her off in two months. Her dying struggles were painful and protracted. For three days and nights I did not leave the house, and scarcely slept."

On the 26th of April, 1809, Matilda Hoffman died, only seventeen, and Washington Irving was completely crushed.

"I cannot tell you what a horrid state of mind I was in for a long time. I seemed to care for nothing; the world was a blank to me. I abandoned all thoughts of the law."

He didn't begin to get his bearings again for many weeks. Soon he remembered the book he'd been working on. He took the manuscript out of the drawer and looked at it. Well, why not finish it?

He left New York altogether for a while, taking *Knickerbocker* with him, and spent the time with friends in the country. When the book was completed, he returned to town and gave it to a publisher.

He still felt depressed, and his never-robust

health showed signs of the strain he'd been under. But when the reviews of the *Knickerbocker History* began to appear, his spirits revived. "The wittiest our press has ever produced," said a Boston paper. A Baltimore paper said the reader of it would fall to pieces from laughter. Its popularity grew in spite of the fact that some Dutch residents were irked by it.

Even though his own name didn't appear on the book, Washington Irving was suddenly famous, not just around New York, but all over the United States. Interesting invitations began to arrive in the mail from Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C. He accepted many of them. James Madison was President, and Mrs. Madison invited Irving to tea while he was in Washington.

Deep in his heart Irving wondered whether his fame would ever reach cities like Paris and London. He hadn't forgotten Talma and Mrs. Siddons.

Those closest to Washington Irving, Henry Brevoort in particular, knew that Washington's success was doing him a world of good. Brevoort thought he needed a further change. He wasn't quite over the loss of Matilda yet.

"Why not move out of your mother's house?" Henry suggested. "We can take rooms together somewhere."

The idea appealed to Irving. He and Henry

found rooms at 16 Broadway—a parlor with two bedrooms. Henry Brevoort owned shelves and shelves of books, and Irving could browse through them and read. But he didn't feel ready to settle down and write another book of his own.

After about a year, Henry Brevoort's affairs took him to Europe, and Washington Irving continued to live in the apartment.

"I have to pull myself out of this mood," he said one day. "If I can't write, then I had better do something else."

The owner of a Philadelphia magazine, *Select Reviews*, wanted him to become its editor.

"We plan to change the name to the *Analectic* magazine," he explained to Irving.

Irving accepted and held the post for about two years. As editor he wrote reviews of new books as well as essays and sketches. He persuaded Jim Paulding to write some material for the magazine. The writing experience was good for both of them, and the responsibility was particularly good for Irving.

At just about the time that Washington Irving was considering the post as editor of the *Analectic*, the War of 1812 broke out between England and the United States. The United States declared war because she claimed that England had been seizing sailors from American ships and stirring up the Indians in the West. Many Americans opposed the

war and felt that differences ought to have been ironed out in conferences. The United States might not be so brave about declaring war if England didn't have so many of her troops tied up in her war with France, they said.

Peter was still in England. He had remained there, because he and Ebenezer had formed an import-export company, doing business between England and America. It was called P. & E. Irving & Co. in New York and P. Irving & Co. in England. They had made Washington a silent partner with one-fifth share in the profits and no responsibilities. They had faith in his literary talents, and they wanted him to have some financial security so that he could go on writing.

Washington Irving still had no taste for politics, and at first he didn't give much thought to the war. He just went on with his work on the magazine. But William Irving had been elected to Congress, and Ebenezer was in the militia, and that brought the war close to home. When the British Navy set up a blockade cutting off the trade of New York and other seaports, that brought it still closer. The Irving brothers, the Pauldings, the Brevoorts, the Astors, and others felt the pinch in their businesses.

In August, 1814, a British invasion force captured Washington, D.C., and burned most of it to the ground—the Capitol, the White House, the

government buildings. When that happened, Irving joined up and became an aide-de-camp to the governor of New York State. His tasks were all paper work; he never saw any action; and the war ended a few months later.

Free and footloose once more, his depressed feelings pretty well cured by the exciting days he had just lived through, Washington Irving asked himself,

“What now?”

He was certainly not going to tie himself down to any more office jobs. Freedom was too nice. He began to think about Peter in England, and about people in Europe whom he wanted to meet. There was at least one he felt confident he could meet: Sir Walter Scott. Henry Brevoort had sent Sir Walter Scott a copy of the *Knickerbocker History*, and while the War of 1812 was going on, Sir Walter Scott had written to Brevoort: “I beg you to accept my best thanks for the uncommon degree of entertainment which I have received from the most excellent jocose history of New York. . . . I have been employed these few evenings in reading it aloud to Mrs. Scott and two ladies who are our guests, and our sides have been absolutely sore with laughter.”

Irving had been reading the Scottish author for several years. Scott had published *The Lay of the*

Last Minstrel when Irving was twenty-two. After that had come *Marmion*, *The Lady of the Lake*, *Waverley*, *Guy Mannering*, *The Heart of Midlothian*.

"I am going to Europe," Irving announced to anyone who cared to listen, and he booked passage on a ship leaving New York in May, 1815.

Rip Van Winkle

Chapter

Seven

*W*ashington Irving landed

in Liverpool, England, where P. Irving & Co. had their offices. He planned to have a short visit with Peter before starting a wandering tour of Great Britain. His plans ended the minute he arrived at Peter's rooms. The brother he hadn't seen for seven years was ill, suffering from such an acute case of rheumatism that he was actually an invalid.

"You can't stay here," said Washington. "I'll take you to Sarah's house in Birmingham where you can rest and have proper care."

"I'm more worried about the business than about myself," said Peter.

"I'll take care of the business for you," said Washington.

Washington had been the baby of the family all his life, looked after by his older brothers and sisters. Now he saw that it was his turn to look after them.

As soon as Peter was safe in Birmingham, Washington visited the company office and found affairs worse than he had realized. Two wars—the War of 1812 and the longer war with Napoleon that had just ended with the Battle of Waterloo—had ruined the Irving brothers' business. To make matters worse, the chief clerk had died, and there was no one in the office to explain anything. Washington Irving had to go over every paper and account himself and study it out.

Having to spend long hours in a business office was for Washington Irving a fate worse than death, but he stuck to it for months. He had never worked so hard or worried so much. If this was what men did in order to be rich, he wanted no riches. He had no time for writing except an occasional letter, and in one to Henry Brevoort, who had long since returned to America, he said:

“I have never passed so anxious a time in my life; my rest has been broken, and my health and spirits almost prostrated. . . . I declare to you, now that I find myself likely to be detained in Europe by unexpected employment, I often feel my heart yearning towards New York, and the dear circle of friends I have left there.”

Except for a short Christmas holiday in Birmingham at Sarah's house, Irving was glued to his job in Liverpool for eight long months. When Peter finally

recovered from his illness and returned to the office, Washington fled—first to Birmingham for a short rest—then off to London to arrange for a new edition of the *Knickerbocker History*, which was still a very popular book.

He was beginning to turn over in his mind the idea of going back to America, but when he received the news that his mother had died, he knew that he wasn't needed at home immediately.

"I think I shall do a little traveling before I return home," he said to Sarah and Peter.

Their eyes twinkled as they asked, "Have you thought of Scotland?"

He certainly had! He'd thought about Scotland and Sir Walter Scott at Abbotsford long before leaving New York. And he'd thought about a tour of Wales.

"And the Continent?" they wanted to know.

"No," he said shaking his head. "I'm not planning to visit the Continent this time."

He went on his Scottish pilgrimage in August, 1817, traveling aboard a sailing smack up the east coast of England to Berwick, Scotland. From there he went to the city of Edinburgh. After seeing the lovely gray granite buildings of Edinburgh, and the city's castle standing high on a huge rock in the center of town, Irving set out for Abbotsford. He carried a letter of introduction to Scott, written for

him by a man named Thomas Campbell who knew both Scott and Irving and knew they would like each other.

Abbotsford was south of the city of Edinburgh on the River Tweed. Irving watched the landscape with delight as his carriage took him through the low rolling hills and open plains of southern Scotland. The air was misty, drizzling at times, clearing by turns. When his carriage reached the gateway to the Abbotsford property, he told the driver to stop.

“Take this letter in to Mr. Scott,” he told the driver. “Tell him I plan to visit the ruins of historic Melrose Abbey nearby, and ask Mr. Scott if he can see me some time today.”

A great black greyhound had heard the carriage and came running and barking furiously. And while the driver was delivering Irving’s letter, a crowd of dogs gathered about the carriage, all barking.

“I’m certainly being announced!” declared Irving, “and by a whole yelping army.”

Suddenly the door of the house burst open, and a man stepped out to see what was wrong with the dogs. Irving’s pulse leaped as he recognized the man from his pictures. Scott was six feet tall, husky, hearty, and he walked with a limp because he had had polio in one leg as a child. He had light brown hair and gray eyes, and he wore a green jacket and



brown linen pantaloons. Scott stomped all the way out to the carriage with his stout walking stick and reached up to shake hands with Irving.

“Come, drive down, drive down to the house,” he said as soon as Irving had introduced himself, and there was a heavy burr in his speech. “Ye’re just in time for breakfast, and afterwards ye shall see all the wonders of the Abbey.”

Irving hadn’t expected that much hospitality, and he held back.

“Hut, man!” Scott declared, “a ride in the morning in the keen air of the Scotch hills is warrant enough for a second breakfast.”

Irving was fairly swept out of his carriage and into the house, to join the Scott family at an ample table—Mrs. Scott, seventeen-year-old Sophia, fourteen-year-old Ann, and two sons, Walter and Charles.

“You must not think our neighborhood is to be read in a morning like a newspaper,” said Sir Walter, and Irving’s visit lasted for four days. During the morning, when Sir Walter was working on the manuscript of his new book, *Rob Roy*, the boys took Irving touring and rambling around the countryside. In the evenings the two writers sat and conversed about literature.

When Irving finally said good-by to Sir Walter Scott, he went on a tour of the Scottish Highlands.

As he looked at the dark green chains of hills, he could easily imagine the ancient Scottish tribesmen swarming over them in their tartan kilts.

Back at his sister's home in Birmingham after his Scottish tour, there was a lot of family news waiting for him. The most important single item was that the business was failing.

"We've got to face facts," he and Peter agreed. "We must go into bankruptcy and bring this whole thing to an end."

There followed more tedious weeks and months of office work, bookkeeping, letter writing, filling out forms, talking with lawyers. Not until the next spring, seven months after his visit to Sir Walter Scott, was Washington Irving once more a free man. He was free and broke, because the bankruptcy had taken all that he had, and put serious dents into his brothers' bank accounts. He was three thousand miles from home, and he had to earn a living.

"All I can do well is write," he told himself, and he took lodgings in London and looked over his notes, jottings, and sketches. They began to form an idea in his mind. He set to work.

The book—or rather, the books—he planned were to be a series of slim volumes of essays on life in England and America. Taken all together they

would comprise at last *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.*

Sketch Book No. I came out in America in May, 1819, when Washington Irving was thirty-six. The introductory words began, "The following writings are published on experiment; should they please they may be followed by others." The book contained six essays. In one he explained how travel had always interested him. "Books of voyages and travels became my passion . . . How wistfully would I wander about the pier-heads in fine weather, and watch the parting ships, bound to distant climes . . ." He told of his longing to see Europe and of his desire to meet the great men of Europe, both now being realized. In *The Voyage* he described what it was like to cross the ocean in his day. In *The Wife* anyone who knew him could tell that he still remembered Matilda and longed for her, even though she wasn't mentioned in the article. But it was the sixth essay that proved his greatness as a writer and made the *Sketch Book* a success. It was the story, *Rip Van Winkle*.

Irving had been abroad for four years by the time he wrote *Rip Van Winkle*. He had had more than one attack of homesickness. When he sailed out of New York in 1815, he had no idea he would be away this long. He thought often of the region that he loved best—the Hudson River Valley, New

York, Westchester, the Catskills. He remembered many of the old Dutch legends told to him by the Pauldins and other residents of Westchester. The ghost of Henry Hudson was supposed to dwell in the Catskills. What if a hunter, wandering through the Catskills with his dog and his gun, were to meet up with Henry Hudson? That is exactly what happened to Rip Van Winkle! He came upon the explorer who had discovered the Hudson River and all his crew in a clearing up in the Catskill Mountains, playing ninepins with solemn faces. The adventure that befell Rip Van Winkle while he was visiting with Henry Hudson and his men was one that his villagers found hard to believe when he returned to town.

Emily Foster

Chapter

Eight

Sketch Book No. II contained only four essays, and it came out four months after the first. The essay that everyone liked best in this group was *Rural Life in England*. It described how much joy Washington Irving felt when he traveled through the English countryside seeing castles, farmhouses, cottages, gardens, and all the charm of its order and quiet and dignity.

Ebenezer Irving supervised the publication of the *Sketch Books* in New York, and Henry Brevoort gave him help with the proofs and such. Ebenezer received one *Sketch Book* after another during the next few months, and they grew more and more popular as each volume was published. Again, Irving's name wasn't on them, but everyone knew who the author was.

Sketch Book No. IV contained *The Spectre Bridegroom*.

In December, Irving received a letter from Sir Walter Scott.

"I am certain the *Sketch Book* could be published here with great advantage," said Scott. "It is a delightful work."

Eventually the *Sketch Books* were published in England, due to Sir Walter Scott's efforts.

That same December, No. VI was ready, and it contained the other story about the Hudson River Valley for which Irving is famous—*The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*—Washington Irving's jovial version of the Headless Horseman who haunted the region of Westchester about Tarrytown.

Meanwhile Peter had come up to London to live with Washington, and as soon as the last *Sketch Book* (No. VII) was completed, the two brothers decided to go to Paris for a holiday. They took the boat across to Le Havre on the French coast and worked their way leisurely through such French towns as Honfleur, Quillebeuf, Fleury, Pontoise, and reached Paris the end of August, 1820. Here are some jottings from Washington Irving's journal:

"Havre. Great houses—throngs on the quay—various colors of the women's dresses—everything done out-of-doors—rags and clothes fluttering from every window—chattering in the street—monkeys and parrots."

"Honfleur. Small town between woody hills—Suchet's Castle by a woody glen . . ."

"Quillebeuf. Scene, the little village of Quillebeuf on the banks of the Seine in upper Normandy—dinner of omelet, beefsteaks, éperlan, chicken, and salad—a man with one arm, black silk cap, spectacles, and book under his arm—stormy night—noise of sailors singing on the water . . ."

"Fleury. Small village in a beautiful valley with a silvery stream winding through it. Church spires in distance—meadows—woody hills—poplars—our diligence slowly winding up hill. Old Frenchman, thin face, gray hair in papers on ears, pigtail, long coat, figured velvet waistcoat, small dog under his coat."

Washington and Peter Irving took rooms in Paris at 4 Rue Mont Thabor, not far from the Tuileries Gardens, the Louvre, and the Seine River. On his first trip to the Continent, Washington Irving had been a young nobody, not really meeting anyone important. On this second jaunt to France, fifteen years later, he was famous. Important people looked him up. His social life began immediately, and Washington Irving, who had been so sober since the death of Matilda, began to show signs of his old gay self. The ladies thought he was simply marvelous, especially when they found out he wasn't married.

One of the most interesting personalities that

Irving met during his six months' vacation in Paris was the Irish poet, Thomas Moore. Moore wrote romantic verse, and the words to many Irish folk songs. He wrote the well-known poem which begins, "Oft, in the stilly night." Irving spent long hours with Thomas Moore and his wife.

François Talma was still the toast of Paris.

"Do we go to the theater?" asked Peter, laughing good-naturedly.

Of course, they went—to see the great actor do *Hamlet* in French. After the performance Washington Irving went backstage to meet Talma, and another friendship was made.

When the Irving brothers returned to London, they were both feeling fresh and fit. Washington had begun to jot down ideas for another book, *Bracebridge Hall*, more essays on life in England. Irving had come to love England, especially English country life. By the end of the summer of 1821 he had completed Volume I and had started Volume II.

By living in England and writing as an American, Irving was serving his country in a special way. The United States was brand-new and had not made any reputation in literature. Washington Irving was really the first important writer of the United States. In the foreword to *Bracebridge Hall* he told about the impression he was making in Eng-



land: "I was looked upon as something new and strange in literature; a kind of demi-savage, with a feather in his hand instead of on his head; and there was a curiosity to hear what such a being had to say about civilized society."

While he was working on the second volume of *Bracebridge Hall*, word came from America that his brother William had died. The news did not come as a complete shock to him and Peter and Sarah, because they knew William had been ailing, but they felt their grief very deeply just the same.

The climate in England is rainy, and often damp and penetrating. Peter had been suffering from it for some time, and during the winter of 1821-22 Washington Irving began to have painful trouble

with his ankles. He worked on anyway, because he wanted to finish Volume II of *Bracebridge Hall*.

The new book came out in the spring of 1822. While many did not like it as well as the *Sketch Books*, it was popular and successful and brought in the money he needed.

He had been consulting doctors about his stiff and swollen ankles, and a change of climate seemed to be the only solution.

"Why don't you go to Aix-la-Chapelle [also called Aachen]," said one doctor. "There are warm sulfur springs there that may help you."

Irving set out for Germany the end of June. He was having a lot of difficulty walking when he started, but a few days at Aix-la-Chapelle did help a great deal.

Aix-la-Chapelle was a place where people went to rest, and, like all such places, it was dull. As soon as Irving's ankles began to improve, he began to itch for a little social life and some new sights.

He had already been studying the German language and German literature, and had become very interested in old German legends. He decided to leave Aix-la-Chapelle and have a look at other parts of Germany. He traveled southward through the valley of the Rhine River, seeing such cities as Cologne, Coblenz, Frankfort, and Heidelberg. They were all ancient and historical and fascinating, and

the Rhine was a great river, flowing sometimes through wide plains or hills or at times high mountains.

“Fancy some of the finest parts of the Hudson embellished with old towns, castles, and convents,” he wrote to Sarah, “and seen under the advantage of the loveliest weather, and you may have some idea of the magnificence and beauty of the Rhine.”

He turned eastward to visit Munich, Salzburg, and Vienna in Austria, and then traveled northward to Dresden. At Dresden he stopped.

Dresden was one of the loveliest cities in Europe in Washington Irving’s day. It was the capital of the Kingdom of Saxony, which was not yet part of Germany. The River Elbe curved through the center, and there were large, attractive buildings, many of them art galleries. Dresden was a center for all kinds of arts.

In a letter to one of his friends Irving reported, “In Dresden I have a very neat, comfortable, and prettily furnished apartment on the first floor of a hotel; it consists of a cabinet with a bed in it, and a cheerful sitting room that looks on the finest square. I am offered this apartment for the winter at the rate of thirty-six shillings a month. Would to heaven I could get such quarters in London for anything like the money.”

His ailment had almost disappeared, and life

took a turn for the better, with social gatherings and public events. He was so popular that he was even on the guest list of the royal family of Saxony. But of all the people he met in Dresden, the Fosters were the people he enjoyed most.

Mrs. Foster was an English lady who had been living in Dresden for some time. She had two grown daughters, Flora and Emily.

"They occupy part of a palace," Washington wrote to Sarah and Peter.

From about Christmas time until the next summer Washington Irving could be found there almost any evening—that is, when he wasn't at the theater with the Fosters or out strolling with Emily Foster. All three Foster ladies were intelligent and attractive and lighthearted. But to Washington Irving, who had his fortieth birthday that spring, eighteen-year-old Emily was the most attractive of all.

A large room in the palace where the Fosters lived had been fitted up as a theater. There Irving and the Fosters did amateur plays together, such as *Tom Thumb* and *King Arthur*.

He seemed to forget completely that he must settle down to writing before very much longer and that his money wouldn't last forever. He went on gaily until the summer. Then the Fosters decided to return to London. Washington couldn't bear to be

in Dresden without them. He packed up and left too.

About that time something went wrong. Mr. Irving started out from Dresden with the Fosters, but he did not go to London with them. Instead, he went to Paris—sorrowful, listless, crushed, depressed. Legend has it that he had proposed marriage to Emily Foster and that she had refused him. The legend is probably true, because Irving behaved like a rejected suitor for the next couple of years.

He took rooms at 89 Rue Richelieu in Paris, and Peter Irving came to live with him.

Washington Irving tried to settle down to work. He had to, because his money was really running low. He had written a few pages and scratched some notes on paper for a book about his travels called *Tales of a Traveler*. He managed to finish it, but when it came out in the summer of 1824 it showed plainly enough how depressed and woebegone he felt. The book was a failure from the word go. The critics blasted it, and it didn't earn any money.

"I guess I'm through as a writer," he decided mournfully.

His old arty friends had looked him up, and he wasted a lot of time and energy just hobnobbing around when he ought to have been working. He wrote a couple of plays; they were rather poor. He

started to write a life of Napoleon, but gave it up. He did a short essay on William the Conqueror.

His spirits sank lower and lower, and so did his bank account. But Washington Irving did have common sense, even though he was moody. He knew he would have to get over his second disappointment in love the way he had his first one.

"I'm not a young man any more," he admitted to himself, "but I'm going to try something new just the same. I think I shall begin to study Spanish."

He and Peter had grown closer and closer over the years. Peter hadn't married either; he was in his early fifties.

The two brothers often felt homesick for America, but still they didn't go home. Once, during his depressed phase, Washington wrote to Henry Brevoort about New York City and the Hudson River:

"There is a charm about that little spot of earth; that beautiful city and its environs, that has a perfect spell over my imagination. The bay, the rivers and their wild and woody shores, the haunts of my boyhood, both on land and water, absolutely have a witchery over my mind. I thank God for my having been born in so beautiful a place among such beautiful scenery; I am convinced I owe a vast deal of what is good and pleasant in my nature to the circumstances."

But ocean voyages are expensive, and Washington Irving could not think seriously of going home just yet.

Among the hosts of interesting persons whom Irving was continually meeting was a Mr. Alexander H. Everett. One day Mr. Everett said, "I am planning to go to Spain."

Washington Irving, who was getting on very well with his Spanish, perked up at once.

"I expect to become United States Minister to Spain," Everett explained.

Irving began at once to tell him about his interest in things Spanish, and Mr. Everett nodded. One word led to another. Soon they were both talking about Spain with great animation.

"If I go to Spain," said Mr. Everett, "I should like to find a post for you at the United States Embassy."

"Thank you very much," Irving replied. "I'm deeply interested."

About the same time an English editor said to Irving, "Why don't you write a life of George Washington? It's a book that is very much needed."

It certainly seemed logical that George Washington's namesake should write the story of his life, but Irving was thinking about Spain just then. At least he had the satisfaction of learning that he was not quite the failure as a writer that he thought.

himself. His readers were hoping for another book from him.

“Why don’t we take a trip to Spain anyway,” Washington and Peter Irving soon agreed. Mr. Everett had been appointed to the embassy there and was already in Madrid, so Irving wrote him to remind him of his promise of an appointment. A reply soon came back.

“You are to be attached to the embassy here. There is a big task awaiting you—to translate into English a book about Christopher Columbus written by the Spanish author, Don Martín Fernandez de Navarrete. Navarrete’s book contains so many hitherto unknown documents about Columbus that we feel an English translation would be valuable to scholars everywhere.”

Irving accepted by return mail and wrote the good news to his friends.

“I set off for Madrid in the course of three or four days. My brother accompanies me.”

Spain

Chapter

Nine

Washington Irving was deeply excited as the galloping horses carried him and his brother southward through France to the Spanish border. Spain was an exotic, faraway, different place. Irving hadn't felt *this* interested in anything since *Emily Foster*. Peter watched him out of the corner of his eye.

"I hope Spain is all that you expect," Peter said. "I don't want you to suffer another disappointment."

"I'm remembering all the stories I read about Granada and the Alhambra when I was a boy," said Washington.

They reached the town of Irun, in the extreme north of Spain, on a Saturday in February, 1826. There would be three more days of traveling before they could reach Madrid.

Cold though it was, and tired though he was,

Washington Irving gazed happily out of the carriage window at the new scenery. Oriental buildings that had been built by the Moors. Ladies in mantillas. Peasant folk driving burros with panniers on their saddles. Castles on distant hilltops. Here are some snatches from the travel diary that Irving kept:

"Breakfast coffee and milk—excellent bread—drive all day through a wild mountainous country with a stream running through it—villages of rugged looking houses—men with sashes—pass mountain of Vergara—just before alighting to walk over it we stop at mountain inn in small village—mules with bells. . . .

"(Monday) Get up at two at night—take chocolate—start in diligence . . . cross the Ebro and enter Old Castile—heavy rain—pass through a wild rocky pass of Pancorbo . . . pass through Corvo—poor village—shabby houses with arms on them—Castilian pride—men with old brown cloaks thrown round shoulders . . . enter on plains of Castile—snow lying on them. . . ."

They stopped at the town of Burgos long enough to visit the cathedral, and then were on their way.

"Arrive for the night at hotel at village of Lerma—great stable full of mules and horses. Kitchen—fireplace on a raised platform of brick in center of the room—a huge funnel above it for chimney—

benches round it where travelers sit—lamp hangs hitched to a cord—half a kid turning on spit. . . .”

But Madrid! Everything that an imaginative writer could hope for or dream of. Palatial houses that gleamed white in the midday sun, decorated with wrought-iron balconies. Wide, lovely streets that were crowded with people in all kinds of costumes. More stately Spanish ladies with tall combs in their hair. Gentlemen in capes and swords. Peasants who resembled the ones Irving had seen on the trip to Madrid. Moslems up from Africa.

Washington went to see Mr. Everett as soon as he was settled.

“Now,” said Mr. Everett, “let me show you where you will be working.”

The two men called on the American Consul, Obadiah Rich. Mr. Rich had been collecting old documents, papers, and books on American history for years and years. He owned a tremendous library, especially of old Spanish documents about America.

The Irving brothers took an apartment right in the building with Mr. Rich, and Washington Irving set to work.

“How is it going?” Peter would ask when they met for dinner in the evening, or as they dressed to go out to a social affair.

It soon became clear to Peter that Washington was disturbed and unhappy about his job.

"The book I'm translating," Washington finally told Peter, "is very important, but it is also very dull because it quotes so many documents. I've decided to give it up and write my own life of Columbus instead—a book that people will enjoy reading."

Irving talked over his idea with Everett and Rich and even Navarrete. They all agreed that a biography of Columbus by Washington Irving—using all the documents available in Madrid—would reach many more people than the translation.

The amiable, carefree, often lazy Washington Irving settled down to the hardest work he had done in his whole life so far. He delved into the material in Mr. Rich's library; he read; he translated; he wrote. He got up as early as five o'clock in the morning and worked for twelve hours—writing, writing, writing. Sometimes he turned out as many as twenty pages a day.

In the evenings he joined Peter and others. One of his interesting new friends was the young Russian Prince Dmitri Dolgorouki, working at the Russian legation in Madrid. Another was Sir David Wilkie, the Scottish painter, who later painted Irving's portrait.

Irving's interest in Spain grew deeper and deeper. He wanted to see all of Spain, but he had to stay in Madrid until his life of Columbus was finished. But

Madrid had a few thrills to offer a visitor. One of these was bullfighting, and into his notebook one day Irving wrote, "To bullfight with Wilkie and Peter—evening at Wilkie's."

He found that the Spanish people dressed in their gay and colorful best to go to the bullfight. As he sat in the great round stadium with his brother and Wilkie, he grew tense and excited as he listened to the brass band, watched the bullfighters file in in their satin breeches, sashes, jackets, and brilliant red capes. Next came the bulls, huge beasts, snorting, pawing the ground, blinded by the sudden sun after their dark stalls. The crowds cheered wildly as man and animal tried to outwit one another. It was a dangerous, cruel sport. Sometimes the man won; sometimes he lost.

Washington Irving had mixed and jumbled feelings about it. He went many times to the bullfights, but he finally decided that they were "a barbarous spectacle." In his heart he really preferred Ricketts's Circus with its trick riding and derring-do. That was *his* native custom.

While he pushed on page after page in his four-volume life of Christopher Columbus, he began to have an idea for another book: *The Conquest of Granada*.

"Are you going to write that next?" Peter asked.
"I must do something on it right now," Wash-

ington replied. "I'm making an outline so that I won't lose the idea. Spain has a fabulous history! The Roman legions conquered it nearly two hundred years before Christ and ruled here for nearly six hundred years. They brought Latin to Spain, and out of their Latin modern Spanish developed. Then came the Goths out of the north. They were wild German tribes. They ruled for some three hundred years. Next, up came the Moors from Africa. They were Moslem Arabs in turbans and flowing robes. They loved everything beautiful—inlaid tile work of many colors—gardens cooled by fountains—palaces like the Alhambra—music."

He paused for breath. Peter knew Washington was talking to himself, and he didn't interrupt.

Washington went on: "The Moslems ruled Spain for three and a half centuries until the kings of the northern province of Castile gradually drove them out. They drove them out of all but Granada. That little kingdom and city in the southeastern part of Spain held out. It remained Moorish until 1492, the same year that Columbus discovered America."

Washington outlined his new idea on paper and then hurried back to his life of Columbus. He must finish it so that he could get on to other things—a tour of Spain, a book on Granada. He worked longer, harder hours than ever.

One day his work was interrupted by a visitor—

a young man from America. The lad was attractive, about nineteen, with wavy brown hair and blue eyes.

“What is your name?” asked Irving.

“Longfellow, sir. Henry Longfellow. I’m traveling in Europe to learn languages so that I can go home and teach them.”

“Please sit down and wait a moment,” said Irving. “I must finish this sentence.”

Busy though he was, Washington Irving talked to Longfellow and learned that he was the young man’s literary hero. The older man tried not to smile as Longfellow gazed at him with so much admiration.

“Where did you first learn about me?” asked Irving.

“I read your *Sketch Book*, and when your *Tales of a Traveler* came out I was in college.”

“Where did you go to college?”

“At Bowdoin, Maine, sir.”

“You were very wise,” said Mr. Irving, and he meant it. “I’ve always regretted that I didn’t go to college. I’ve always felt the lack of it.”

Another young man had come to see Washington Irving just a short while before Longfellow. That was his nephew Pierre M. Irving, one of William’s children. Pierre eventually wrote a long biography of his uncle.

One day during the summer of 1827, almost a year and a half after his arrival in Madrid, Washington Irving laid down his pen and said, "It is finished."

His long work, *A History of the Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus*, in four volumes, was completed.

"Now I can think of my next book! Now we can tour the rest of Spain!" he said to Peter.

Peter shook his head. His health had grown worse, and he knew he couldn't stand the difficulties of traveling in Spain. In fact, Peter felt so poorly that he decided to return to Paris.

"Perhaps we had better both think of going home," said Washington.

"No!" Peter objected. "You have more work to do here."

Washington was disappointed not to have Peter with him on his tour of Spain, but there would be others going. Prince Dolgorouki would be with him part of the time, and so would Wilkie.

In the very early spring of 1828 Irving set out southward from Madrid, passing through miles of flat country, villages, grain fields, olive groves, and grape vineyards. Southern Spain was actually tropical, with orange groves, fig and palm trees, and the air was dry because of the high altitude and lack of rainfall. In the very southern part he came to a

mountain range called the Sierra Nevada, and high in the Sierra Nevada was Granada, a city of white stucco houses and red tile roofs. On the edge of town, looking down on the city, was the Alhambra, summer palace of the Moorish emperors.

“Bellissima Granada!” Irving called the city.

He was shocked to discover that much of the Alhambra Palace was in ruins. Many of the lovely, smooth bright-colored tile squares had been chipped out of the walls.

“The gypsies sneak in and steal the tiles,” he was told. “They can sell them.”

He stayed only a few days in Granada on his first visit, but Washington Irving could not forget the quaint, ancient city and its palace. He went on down to the southernmost tip of Spain to visit Gibraltar. From there he went on to Cadiz and Seville, still thinking of Granada. The sun grew hotter as the summer progressed, and the air grew dustier. Seville proved to be a very ancient Moorish city, with narrow, winding streets. Much to Irving’s delight, Wilkie joined him in Seville for a short visit.

“Are you coming back to Madrid?” asked Wilkie.

“No,” said Irving, and told him about the book he wanted to write, *The Conquest of Granada*. “I’m going to write it here in Seville.”

Seville was so hot in July that Irving had to take

a cottage out in the country. There, with six weeks of hard work, he finished his second book on Spain, and by October he had mailed it to his publisher in New York.

He spent the whole winter in Seville, and the following May he returned to Granada, because there were two more books he wanted to write about Spain. This time Prince Dolgorouki traveled with him. The trip across southern Spain from Seville to Granada took five days on horseback.

By that time Irving's reputation was well established. There was no more talk about being through as a writer. The Spanish people especially loved him for his work on Columbus. When he returned to Granada to collect more material to continue his Spanish writings, the governor of the Alhambra offered him and Prince Dolgorouki his own apartment right in the Alhambra Palace.

The royal palace was under the care of a Spanish woman whom everyone called Tia Antonia, or Aunt Antonia. She took care of the rooms and showed travelers about the palace and grounds. With her lived her niece, Dolores, and her nephew, Manuel. They all looked after Washington Irving while he was there.

"I have also at my command a tall, stuttering, yellow-haired lad named Pepe," Irving wrote. "When I rise in the morning, Pepe . . . brings me

a tribute of fresh-culled flowers, which is afterward arranged in vases by the skillful hand of Dolores, who takes no small pride in the decorations of my chamber. My meals are made wherever caprice dictates, sometimes in one of the Moorish halls, some-



times under the arcades of the Court of Lions, surrounded by flowers and fountains."

Prince Dolgorouki stayed with Irving a week, and when he left, Irving settled down to earnest work. He roamed and rambled through the court and gardens of the palace, learning all the old legends from the local people. Irving remained at the Alhambra until he had finished writing *The Legends of the Conquest of Spain*, and started to gather together his notes for *The Alhambra, a Series of Tales and Sketches of the Moors and Spaniards*. This book is usually just called *Tales of the Alhambra*.

Then interesting letters began to arrive from his brother Ebenezer and Henry Brevoort in America. "We're taking steps to have you appointed Secretary of Legation [that was the American Legation] in London," they told him.

Irving had never cared much about official honors, and he was beginning to think thoughts of home since his work in Spain was just about completed. He wanted to see New York and the Hudson and go to a show in the John Street Theater once more. But duty was duty, and with a suitcase full of notes about Spain he set out for England, stopping off in Paris for a visit with Peter. He arrived in London with a flourish—an author, a celebrity, a scholar, an expert on Spain.

Irving was in England for two and a half years,

and his new diplomatic post allowed him enough free time to finish *Tales of the Alhambra*. He wrote a second book on Columbus, too, called *Voyages and Discoveries of the Companions of Columbus*.

Irving's one true interest was writing. While his post in London was fairly easy, it still took too much time away from his own work. He began to feel irked about it, and he finally sent his resignation to Washington, D.C. Martin Van Buren was appointed to replace him. As soon as Van Buren arrived and Washington Irving had explained all his tasks to him, Irving booked passage for America.

He went aboard a packet on April 11, 1832—with very mixed feelings indeed—and on the 21st of May he stepped ashore in New York.

New York After Seventeen Years

Chapter

Ten

New York City had grown like a mushroom in the years that Washington Irving had been away. The burned-out buildings had all been replaced. New streets were opened up. Docks had been added to take care of the increased trade. The streets teemed with new residents. The town had been almost ruined by the Revolution; now it was thriving. Where Irving remembered green forests there were rows and rows of houses.

He sailed up the bay, he said, "with a heart swelling." His city! His river!

New York was just as thrilled to see Irving. He had gone away unknown; he had come home famous—the country's first great writer. Ebenezer and John and their wives and their many children, as well as a crowd of admirers, met him at the pier. All his old acquaintances were ready with a mammoth banquet at the City Hotel.

As soon as the welcomes were over, Irving went on some sight-seeing trips—along the Battery, through Tarrytown and Sleepy Hollow, and up the Hudson. This time he made the trip in a steamboat and reached West Point in four hours. He was traveling with Jim Paulding, and he watched eagerly for the Catskill Mountains. He had to chuckle when people thought they knew the exact location of the scenes of the Rip Van Winkle story. He didn't know that much about it himself.

A few weeks after his return, *Tales of the Alhambra* came out and added still more to his popularity.

Irving was a seasoned traveler after seventeen years in Europe. Traveling could still give him ideas and materials for books. At his desk in his brother Ebenezer's house on 3 Bridge Street, where he lived whenever he was in New York City, Irving began to plan more travel—in the United States and the Territories.

In 1832 the United States consisted of twenty-four states, and only two of them were west of the Mississippi River. They were Louisiana and Missouri. Arkansas, Michigan, and Florida were still Territories. Texas and New Mexico still belonged to Mexico, and all the Northwest was a vast, dangerous, unknown country.

On the 3rd of September, Washington Irving set

out on an exploration down two more great American rivers—the Ohio and the Mississippi. He was to see the real wilderness, the parts of America still occupied by the Indian tribes, the forests, and the prairies of the West.

He left Cincinnati by steamboat and arrived at Louisville the next day. There he changed to another steamboat and continued on down the Ohio River. Along his journey he saw "clearings on the banks of the river," or "a solitary log hut with corn fields among the forests," or "silent, primeval forest sleeping in the sunshine—on each side still forest—forest—forest." In the lovely September weather the river was glassy in the sunshine and full of wild ducks.

"The magnificence of the western forests is quite beyond my anticipations," he wrote home to his sister, Mrs. Paris.

The Mississippi River carried him through Indian lands, and he visited with the Cherokees, the Kickapoos, the Osages. By the end of September he was touring the prairies in an open wagon, camping out and eating venison, listening to the wolves howling at night, seeing herds of wild horses or buffalo.

The middle of October he wrote home from Arkansas: "We are now on the borders of the Pawnee country, a region untraversed by white men, except

by solitary trappers. We are leading a wild life, depending upon game, such as deer, elk, bear, for food, encamping on the borders of brooks, and sleeping in the open air under trees, with outposts stationed to guard us against any surprise by the Indians."

The Mississippi River grew wider and deeper as Irving went on southward. When he finally reached the city of New Orleans, he found it to be amazing —full of things he had seen in France and Spain. "One of the most motley and amusing places in the United States," he called New Orleans. "A mixture of America and Europe. The French part of the city is a counterpart of some provincial French town; and the levee, or esplanade along the river, presents the most whimsical groups of people of all nations, castes, and colors—French, Spanish, half-breeds, creoles, mulattoes, Kentuckians, etc."

He returned to New York in the mail stage, through Mobile, Alabama, South and North Carolina, Virginia, and Washington.

There was constant talk about the West in those days. New states were being added to the Union. New Territories were being added to the United States. New country was being explored. Young men went West to make their fortunes. A book about the West by a popular American author

would be a sure-fire sale. That is what Irving wrote: *A Tour on the Prairies*. It came out in 1835.

Washington Irving knew better than anyone else that his energies were waning. The Western trip had been strenuous enough for a much younger man.

"It's time I settled down."

He purchased a piece of land in Westchester County, in the region haunted by the Headless Horseman, high on the eastern shore of the Hudson River overlooking the Tappan Zee. There was a small building on the land, owned by the Van Tassels during the Revolution, that had been used as a lookout against British raids. Irving, with the help of an architect friend, designed elaborate plans for enlarging the building. Carpenters and stone masons were busily at work on it during the summers of 1835 and 1836.

The house that resulted showed all the traveling and reading he had done. The outside was a mixture of Dutch, English, Spanish, and even Chinese design. Inside, the fireplaces were of Spanish marble, the lace curtains were from Brussels, and the table china was French. Along the riverside he had a long porch built where he could sit and enjoy the view. Sir Walter Scott sent him a slip of the ivy that grew all over Abbotsford.



Washington Irving's house is still there for visitors to see, and many of his possessions are still there, too. The building is partly covered with Sir Walter Scott's ivy. It is on the southern edge of Tarrytown, its village named Irvington in his honor.

Irving called his house "The Roost" at first, but later he named it "Sunnyside."

"It promises to be a quaint, picturesque little pile," he wrote to Peter.

Peter Irving was still in Paris, but his health was



really failing, and Washington wanted him to come home. Before Christmas of 1836 the fifty-three-year-old Washington Irving had moved in to Sunnyside, and the sixty-four-year-old Peter had returned from Paris to live with him. But two years later Peter died, and Washington was glad he had made him comfortable in his last days.

Irving's life was very quiet. There was always one niece or another at the house to take care of him. Interesting and important persons traveled to Tarrytown to visit him.

In the back of his mind, Irving had never forgotten the suggestion that he write a life of George Washington. He had been collecting notes and papers on it. In these settled years at Sunnyside he had both the leisure and the peace in which to begin the

life of the man who had patted him on the head and blessed him when he was a little boy.

He was deep in the task when sudden news from the national government shattered his peace. It made him rush to New York City to see the Secretary of State, Mr. Daniel Webster. He walked up and down in Mr. Webster's office, muttering, "It is hard—very hard, yet I must try to bear it."

President John Tyler had appointed Washington Irving United States Minister to Spain.

"Washington Irving is now the most astonished man in the city of New York," said Mr. Webster later.

Washington Irving didn't want to leave his peaceful home life and his biography of George Washington, but he knew he had a duty. He understood Spain, and the Spanish people loved and respected him. He had a talent for getting along with every kind of person. He was really a very wise choice for the position.

When he accepted the post, everyone was delighted. Henry Clay, who was a United States Senator, said, "Ah, this is a nomination everybody will concur in!"

So, in April, 1842, Washington Irving sailed for Europe once more.

Home to Stay

Chapter

Eleven

*W*ashington Irving's young

nephew, William's son Pierre Irving, looked after his business affairs in America while he was in Spain. With him to Europe went J. Carson Brevoort, Henry Brevoort's son. Irving smiled as he realized that a whole new generation had grown up and was gradually taking over.

"They're certainly more responsible fellows than I was at their age," he chuckled.

His journey took him through England and France and gave him a chance to visit his sister Mrs. Van Wart in England and many of his old friends there, such as Thomas Moore. Since he was now a high-ranking diplomat he was presented at Court in England and had an opportunity to meet the new young monarch, Queen Victoria, and her husband, Prince Albert.

He found internal affairs in Spain in a turmoil

of plotting, cross-currents, factions, civil strife. He even lived through an armed uprising while he was there. He had brought with him his notes and materials for his life of Washington, but he had so many duties as Minister that there was no spare time.

Irving was over sixty; he no longer had the energy he had had as a young man. His ankles became inflamed again, so that he was confined to his bed at times. He was not a wealthy man either, and his social position as Minister was very expensive. He grew lonely and discouraged. He was discovering that politics in high places can be pretty distasteful.

His sense of responsibility kept him at his post for more than three years. But at the end of 1845 he could bear it no longer and he sent in his resignation. To his nephew Pierre he wrote, "I long to throw off diplomacy and to return to my independent literary pursuits."

By the next fall he was back at Sunnyside—resting, relaxing, thinking once more about the great man for whom he had been named. Soon he was at work, writing at home or making occasional trips to the national capital to read through George Washington's personal papers. The project was going to take several years.

"All I fear," he said in 1849 when he was sixty-six, "is to fail in health and fail in completing this work at the same time. If I can only live to finish it,

I would be willing to die the next moment. I think I can make it a most interesting book—can give interest and strength to many points, without any prostration of historic dignity. If I had only ten years more of life!"

Actually he did have ten years more, and he finished his life of George Washington in eight. The Washington biography, five volumes in all, came out a volume at a time from 1855 through 1857. It was the first complete biography of Washington that had ever been written, and for many, many years it was *the* biography of the first President. Irving's own name appeared on both the Washington and Columbus biographies instead of a pen name, since they were such serious works.

During the years that he was writing his life of George Washington, Washington Irving's other books sold extremely well, and he had all the comforts he needed. Honors came to him from time to time, and they added to his happiness. When John Jacob Astor died, he left a large sum of money in his will to found a public library in New York City. He had discussed the idea often with Washington Irving and others, and they all encouraged him to do it. The library that Astor founded eventually became the Fifth Avenue Library in New York City, and Washington Irving was one of the trustees.

The Washington biography was Irving's last

work. The desire to finish it had no doubt sustained him, and when it was done his energies began to run downhill.

“My own place has never been so beautiful as at present. I have made more openings by pruning and cutting down trees, so that from the piazza I have several charming views of the Tappan Zee and the hills beyond, all set, as it were, in verdant frames; and I am never tired of sitting there in my old Voltaire chair, of a long summer morning, with a book in my hand, sometimes reading, sometimes musing, and sometimes dozing, and mixing all up in a pleasant dream.”

He died on November 28, 1859, at the age of seventy-six. His doctor, one of his nieces, and his nephew Pierre were with him at the time. He was laid to rest in the Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, not far from the grave of the Headless Horseman.



